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FIRST THINGS

christ and creation's longing
RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS

law and the christian story
WILLIAM J. STUNTZ

memoirs of a catholic boyhood
A. J. BACEVICH

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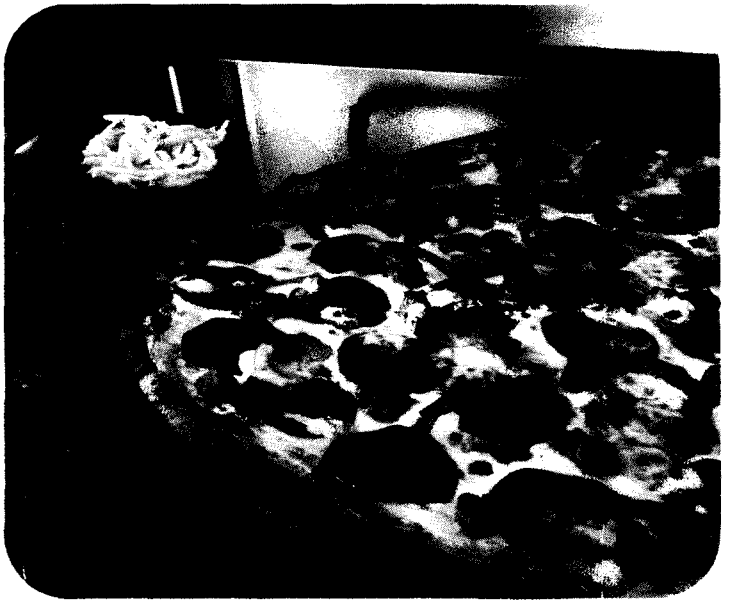

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FIRST THINGS

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The San Francisco Solution?

Thank you for publishing Archbishop William J. Levada's "The San Francisco Solution" (August/September), on that city's domestic partnership ordinance and the Catholic Church's response. It was a masterpiece of good Catholic thinking as applied pastorally to a particularly difficult situation. The only surprise is that anyone would think that the Archbishop's solution to the legislation in any way compromised Catholic doctrine. . . .

The Archbishop's solution is a pastoral solution, not a compromise of Catholic doctrine: "Each employee is allowed to designate a legally domiciled member of the employee's household as being eligible for spousal equivalent benefits." The Archbishop asks no question of those designated persons and he respects their privacy, for which they alone must answer to God. The employee may have an aged and sick friend legally in his home, he/she may be a guardian legally appointed by the court for a particular party, etc. This compromise does not force the Catholic diocese to recognize domestic partners as the equivalent of marriage. This is not and cannot be possible in Catholic doctrine. . . .

The Archbishop has shown us how the Church can be compassionate and pastorally wise even while upholding a doctrine that is unpopular among gays but that does not condemn them or make them objects of opprobrium. I am tempted to say that the solution borders on genius, but that might embarrass the Archbishop. Let's just say that the Lord has chosen a wise steward to guide his flock in San Francisco.

Peter J. Riga
Houston, TX

. . . The rationale of social benefits for family dependents is straightforward. Families include children that need to be taken care of. The ideal caretaker of the family is the mother who needs to be provided for while she discharges the most productive work in the community: the rearing of children. This is, in my estimation, the rationale for providing social benefits for the family. But what are the reasons for providing benefits for a roommate of either sex? None. Both "partners" have jobs—or can have jobs since there are no impediments or dependents to prevent it.

The profound meaning of the husband and wife relationship leading to a new creation (the offspring) is unique and foundational, and of a different order from homosexual relationships. It is therefore unfair to blur this truth by equating homosexual relationships with family relationships. . . .

Luis F. Caso
Worthington, OH

Reading Archbishop Levada's defense of his "San Francisco Solution," I am struck not only by the weakness of his arguments, but by his lack of foresight on how his decision will affect the debate on "domestic partnership" and homosexual "marriage."

Although Archbishop Levada certainly did proclaim the Church's teaching on sexuality publicly and clearly, he utterly failed to proclaim other important teachings that were threatened by the San Francisco ordinance—the centrality of the family to society and the duty of the state to promote its health. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, "The importance of the family for the life and well-being of society entails a particular responsibility for society to support and strengthen marriage and the family" (2210). The San Francisco law—and all other laws purporting to equate cohabitation with marriage—are a direct threat to the stability of the family, do nothing to support or strengthen marriage, and consequently should be denounced by Church leaders on precisely those terms.

Providing "spousal equivalent" benefits, as the Archdiocese of San Francisco will now do, tells cohabiting couples that marriage is not really all that important to society, but is

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merely a private decision. Moreover, it means that the state and private organizations will no longer provide a financial incentive for such couples to get married. In an era when as many as 40 percent of Catholics live together before marriage, and when marriage is under increasing attack, shouldn't the leaders of the Church be talking about defending the family in our laws, rather than offering vaporous comments about universal health coverage?

Particularly disturbing is the Archbishop's Pollyana-like belief that his "solution" will lead to the defeat of other "domestic partner" bills. That is along the same lines as General Lee defending his Appomattox "solution" as likely to lead to the defeat of other Union forces in the field. Consider the powerful rhetorical weapon he has provided the proponents of these bills, and the fact that they are already crowing about the Church's recognition of same-sex relationships. Does he believe that Catholic and other pro-family activists will be emboldened by his decision? What response does he think can be made when the "domestic partnership" advocates ask, "If it's alright for the Archbishop of San Francisco, how can you oppose it here?" Which one of his fellow prelates will step out front and oppose similar ordinances, and thereby implicitly criticize a brother bishop? . . .

Edward T. Mechmann
Yonkers, NY

Dealing with Divorce

In her exchange with Barbara Dafoe Whitehead ("End No-Fault Divorce?" August/September), Maggie Gallagher writes a brilliantly logical refutation of no-fault divorce that, unhappily, begins from premises unrelated to reality:

1. Marriage is analogous to other contracts.

2. No-fault divorce has transformed what it means to get married.

3. No-fault divorce laws have pushed us over the edge from being a society in which the majority of marriages succeed to one in which a majority of new marriages will fail.

4. When the law treats divorce as a unilateral right of one partner, culture can hardly take seriously the moral claims of marriage.

In fact, since people ceased being chattel, marriage ceased being a contract like other contracts.

Further, no-fault divorce has not transformed what it means to get married, at least in the arena of heart and hope. People don't get married thinking they will some day bitterly hate the one they now promise to love forever.

Third, it is debatable that the longevity of a marriage indicates the success of that marriage.

Lastly, our culture does take the moral claims of marriage seriously, even with no-fault divorce. Divorce remains a painful admission of failure. Families, blissfully uninfluenced by no-fault divorce law, exert great pressure on their members to attempt wise choices of marriage partners, and to work hard at making marriages happy. . . .

James E. Metcalf
Hudsonville, MI

In reading Barbara Dafoe Whitehead's argument concerning no-fault divorce, I was struck by how many of her points actually led me to a conclusion opposite to the one they led her to. Typical among them is the argument that young couples, assuming their marriage will fail anyway, will be less likely to get married if divorce is harder to obtain. Exactly! God forbid that young men and women who have reason to suspect their marriage will fail should not get married in the first place. Good Heavens! What's next? Before you know it we will be trying to impress upon engaged couples the seriousness of the commitment they are making.

Steve Jones
Charlottesville, VA

I applaud Ms. Whitehead's personal efforts in support of marriage. But I respectfully disagree with her conclusion about no-fault divorce. Her argument seems to be that law is an expression of the will of the people, and that we should first seek to recti-

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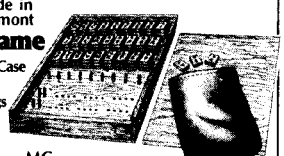
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fy society before we change the law lest the law be thrown into disrespect. I would argue, however, that law has a didactic function and therefore serves as an instrument to rectify society—as it has, for example, with respect to racism. In matters of custom the law can express the popular will. But the law must never deviate from justice, without which society has no foundation. No-fault divorce inflicts injustice not only upon the injured spouse (often an abandoned wife), but also upon society.

The most profound injustice is done to children. Every child comes into this world with a natural right to have two friends waiting to receive him. Marriage is never easy, but the spouses are obliged to work out their own problems. Whatever their dispute may be, their children are still entitled to the undivided commitment of both parents. Divorce is nothing less than the psychic despoliation of one's offspring. If a spouse can legally walk away from a marriage as if it were merely a contractual relationship, what are the children but property whose ownership is to be determined by a court? If our purported concern for children is more than just fiction, we should normally forbid divorce as long as there is a child of the marriage under the age of majority. Certain conditions may require separation of the spouses, but remarriage should be prohibited and financial obligations should be maintained. . . .

Adrian Calderone
Brooklyn, NY

. . . I am seriously troubled that neither Ms. Gallagher nor Ms. Whitehead addresses the impact of divorce law on children. Rarely is an area of law so directly confrontational and so clearly felt by our children. First, children from the marriage must go through the divorce. We have heard before so many times in a divorce: "What is happening between your mother [father] and me does not change the way I love you," or some variant thereof. We know now (finally) that divorce is bad for children. . . .

The second consequence of divorce for children is how government and the law affect their opinion of marriage and divorce. They realize, sooner or later, that the law makes divorce fault-free. . . . When law makes divorce permissible, it sends the unmistakable signal to the child: marriage as an institution is not to be carefully guarded. . . .

Gregory J. Yu
Burlingame, CA

Barbara Dafoe Whitehead replies:

Although I share Messrs. Calderone and Yu's concern over the damages of divorce to children, I do not share their faith in fault law as an effective way of protecting children from the harms of divorce. This does not mean that there should be *no* attempt to change the laws governing divorce. Indeed, the states are considering a number of worthwhile reform measures: mandatory premarital counseling, longer waiting periods before divorce is granted, and, when divorce cannot be avoided, a "children-first approach" that would require parents to establish a plan for their children's economic and educational futures before they go about the business of dividing marital property or establishing custody.

Nevertheless, I argue for a measure of modesty in our expectations about the ability of law and public policy to govern family affairs. The swift decline of marriage reminds us of how quickly an institution can fall apart when it loses support and sponsorship within the larger society. The custodians of a marriage tradition—women, clergy, marriage counselors, scholars of marriage and family—have defected to the divorce culture in large numbers. A spirit of sourness and disappointment pervades novels, soap operas, women's magazines, television docudramas, and talk shows. Today's adults feel little responsibility to prepare the next generation for the rewards and responsibilities of marriage.

As a consequence, the body of inherited thought, revised practice, and new knowledge that traditionally sustains marriage has all but perished. In the midst of such a profound breakdown in the extralegal supports for marriage, the resort to legal coercion to shore up the institution may be as much symptom as cure.

Considering Suicide

Professor David Novak's article "Suicide Is Not a Private Choice" (August/September) is perhaps as provocative for what it does not say as for what it does. And one does not know whether the omissions are as deliberate as the assertions.

Mr. Novak observes that in the Talmud suicide is prohibited, and assisting a suicide is legally punishable. Much of the Christian tradition has been equally explicit. So, for example, both Augustine and Aquinas reject any moral legitimacy for suicide (though, it seems to me, for substantially different reasons). And just last year Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, the Archbishop of Chicago, wrote a widely publicized "open letter" to the U.S. Supreme Court saying that "our legal and ethical tradition has held consistently that suicide, assisted suicide, and euthanasia are wrong."

Perhaps Mr. Novak would himself endorse these categorical condemnations. But his article contains no such condemnation, and the arguments that he mounts would not support it. At most they support the conclusion that suicide is not per se a *purely* private choice, and that some wider community—perhaps even the political state—has a legitimate role to play in this affair. Many of us who are inclined to think that suicide, though a sad and tragic undertaking, is morally (and spiritually) legitimate in some circumstances could concur in that conclusion. . . .

Some of us will think that suicide is, with respect to privacy, roughly analogous to marriage. In only the most extreme circumstances—Robinson Crusoe on his desert island—would suicide approximate a purely private choice. Robert Frost felt the pull of the lovely woods, "dark and deep," but he decided to go on because "I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep." Of course, promises are not the only way in which we are linked to other people and communities. And Mr. Novak

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may well be right in thinking that there are other relations that have more of a "given" character about them, and so are less voluntaristic, than promises. Thus we may have many things to "keep," and many miles to go, before we may legitimately lie down to sleep.

It does not follow, however, that we never come to the end of those miles, that we have an infinite weight of such obligations. There is, in fact, a powerful defense of the legitimacy of (some) euthanasia and suicide, argued on the basis of natural law principles, by Lisa Sowle Cahill ("A 'Natural Law' Reconsideration of Euthanasia," in Stephen Lammers and Allen Verhey, eds., *On Moral Medicine*). A categorical rejection of the legitimacy of suicide under all circumstances would need much more than David Novak has supplied here. But maybe, as I say, he did not really intend such a rejection.

George I. Mavrodes
Department of Philosophy
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, MI

David Novak replies:

I very much appreciate George Mavrodes' sympathetic reading of my "Suicide Is Not a Private Choice." As regards his point that my article does not contain a categorical condemnation of suicide, he is right. Such a categorical condemnation could come only from the view common to both Socrates and the Rabbis that one may not leave this world until taken from it by God. In other words, it comes from the most fundamental religious view of divine ownership of the world. The problem with this view is that it is not helpful in authorizing human intervention when someone else's suicide is imminent. Such a justification for intervention seems to place too much divine authority in human hands, which is the problem of religiously justified tyranny, one that goes back to Amos' rebuke of Amaziah and Antigone's rebuke of Creon.

So, my point in the article was to emphasize suicide as an interhuman problem. It is the problem of how human community, in its very raison d'être, must save all of us from our own destructive impulses, both of ourselves and of others. Since human responsibility and authority is never as extensive as that of God, it stands to reason that one cannot derive more categorical condemnations from it. That means that there are cases where we can go only so far, in effect not putting a suicidal person in a straightjacket. But our message must always be that no matter how far gone you are, we will never justify leaving you to your personally unbearable pain and rage, even when we cannot reach you. Those we cannot save we mourn.

What Elected Clinton?

In the August/September issue, John Green, Lyman Kellstedt, James Guth, and Corwin Smidt make a persuasive case for "Who Elected Clinton." Because I found both Clinton elections so unsettling, I have pondered the same question myself. I do not challenge the authors' findings, but ask only that one other angle be considered.

Let us concede that the groups who voted for Clinton are described accurately, and that they voted for him for the reasons the authors describe. Would that mean that there are other Democrats, close to Clinton in political philosophy, who would also have beaten Bush and Dole? Paul Wellstone, Michael Dukakis, and Barbara Boxer, for example? I say no. In the same vein, would Clinton have been able to defeat Ronald Reagan in his prime? Reagan's platform was virtually the same as that of Bush and Dole. I say no again.

My point is that the Clinton elections were won by carrying a swing vote attracted to Clinton in the main because of what I call his "star quality." I mean by that something close to what people mean when they use the term "charisma," but something more superficial—and troubling—than the magnetism that surrounded FDR and JFK. It is a product of the television age. Those who vote on the basis of political philosophy and a patriotic concern for the common good might find the notion of "star quality" humorous, but the modern audiences of the Oprah-type shows do not. . . .

Even the things that conservatives mocked worked in Clinton's favor: the MTV appearances, the saxophone playing on the Arsenio Hall show. There is a segment of our population that reacts well to such things. And they were the swing vote. "Soccer moms" is as good a term as any to describe them. Fortunately for the Republicans, there does not seem to be any other Democrat on the horizon with the same combination of roguish good looks and a flair for effective sentimentality that characterizes Clinton. He might be the most detested President of this century, but he hit on a fascinating winning formula: combining the votes of those Democrats who vote for him while holding their noses, because he is a Democrat, with the vote of the soccer moms—who come in both sexes, by the way.

James K. Fitzpatrick
Mahopac, NY

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In Defense of Canada

As a longtime subscriber and promoter of your excellent publication, I write to express my dismay in regards to your rather infrequent references to Canada, your northern neighbor.

The essay entitled "Oh, Canada" by James Nuechterlein in August/September is written by an American professor who taught American history in Canada from 1964 to 1981. He describes himself "as an instinctive American patriot" who "knew from the beginning" that he could never become a Canadian. In my view, these are not impressive qualifications to comment on the current Canadian political scene. . . .

Mr. Nuechterlein concludes that the heart of Canadian patriotism is anti-Americanism, that Canadian culture is perpetually fragile, and that we are facing the possibly imminent break-up of the nation. Oh Canada! . . .

Canada is a wonderful country, this year again rated number one by the United Nations. . . .

As to our imminent break-up please remember that the separatists have *lost* two referendums. There may or may not be a third. Why assume that there will be and that the separatists will win?

I hope in the future that you will give your readers a more positive view of Canada, "my home and native land."

R. O. Stephens
Campbellford, Ontario

The Harlot Church?

The statement "That They May Have Life" (August/September) from the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod was marvelous and just right, beautiful as truth is beautiful. However, the Lutherans could afford to say it—it won't cost them anything.

The Catholic Church has become hostage to federal money. (Note Archbishop Levada's compromise in the same issue.) Over the past thirty years, all manner of moral adjustments have been made by liberal bishops to elect candidates who would vote money to support social programs. No reasonably intelligent person would find a comparison between the innocent fetus and a murderer awaiting capital punishment—but some of our bishops have. The Lutherans have not.

We have the example of Jesus inviting the rich young man to give away all that he has and to follow him. Christ's disciples do not grab the young man and tear his money from his toga. There is also a commandment against stealing. No, as Christians, we are to open our hands freely from love. It takes a leap of faith to trust that God will provide.

Today the appeal is not to "Christian charity" but "social justice." And our hands are pried open by the tax collector to redistribute, coldly, our hard-earned money. When we give as Christians, we bring Jesus to the receiver. We see the Lord in those we help, giving them dignity and hope.

The Catholic Church should be the Church that says what the Lutherans have said. Until that time the Bride of Christ is a harlot.

Nancy E. Hamel
Ijamsville, MD

For the Record

I want to thank you for the generous review of my book, *Covenant and Commitments* from Westminster/John Knox (Briefly Noted, August/September), but wish to clarify two points. First, I am not the general editor of the series on Religion and Family in America Culture in which it appears. Don Browning of the University of Chicago is. I am general editor of another series that includes Tom Derr's fine book, *Environmental Ethics and Christian Humanism* from Abingdon, which you also reviewed.

Second, while other volumes in the Browning series deal with family life and law, social psychology, contemporary biblical scholarship, comparative church teachings, etc., this volume deals with the relationships of the family to economics, including various ideologies and patterns of poverty, wealth, property, productivity, consumption, division of labor in the household, and participation in civil society.

Max L. Stackhouse
Princeton Theological Seminary
Princeton, NJ

Discrimination, Rightly Understood

Not that Richard John Neuhaus needs any help in his exchange with Dean Kornman about discrimination for or against religion at Yale Law School (Correspondence, August/September), but isn't it obvious that "discrimination" or its opposite, "anti-discrimination," are hardly neutral words, or actions for that matter? The dynamic of "discrimination" implies a choosing based on discernment. It is always discrimination for or against, reflected as anti-discrimination against or for.

The neutralization of discrimination, as Dean Kronman would have it, makes "anti-discrimination" an absolute standard, much as Americans tend to make "freedom" or "democracy" absolute. While this absolutizing can be found in any puritanical society, it is an unfortunate legacy of our American foundations. It jars Catholic sensibilities, which recognize only God as absolute. A proper sense of reality underscores "freedom" in God, "democracy" in God, and "discrimination" in God, which is to say that such ideas are not absolutes but derive their moral or political force from a proper relation to the sole absolute.

We talk properly, then, about good or bad freedom, good or bad democracy, and good or bad discrimination. This logic applies equally well to the shibboleths of the American idiom: censorship, politics, liberalism, etc. All of which reiterates the ancient wisdom: every virtue is shadowed by a masquerading vice. Public and civilized dialogue should be an effort to distinguish the good from the bad, a dialogue rendered impossible by the absolutizers.

J. R. Breton
Walpole, MA

Whites and Nonwhites

In the Public Square of August/September, Richard John Neuhaus addresses President's Clinton's recent commencement speech on race relations ("President Clinton and the White Race"). . . . The President's

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"Can we become one America in the twenty-first century?" made me wonder if Rodney King had been hired as his speech writer. In contrast, Father Neuhaus argues essentially that getting along better in this country with regard to race depends on our ability to get beyond making an issue of race.

Because Mr. Clinton exploits race and Fr. Neuhaus minimizes it, they both miss a central point of America's race relations. The "majority" that both these men refer to is made up of white people who have benefited from a white-designed social infrastructure that to a significant degree has used military, religious, and economic power to enslave, murder, oppress, and disregard nonwhites. This piece of history is important to recognize and validate simply because it's the truth, an essential concern of Christianity. . . .

Fr. Neuhaus opines that members of the white "majority" don't identify themselves by race and that the President is fostering racial disharmony by inviting them to do so. He's right on both accounts. Stopping there, however, he denies the experience of the people who make up the other half of the relationship (nonwhites), how they might view themselves, and how they might view the "majority." Disregard race here and you disregard what is important to many of these people . . . again. Even to this white, Catholic writer, Fr. Neuhaus, at times, comes off sounding like another white guy using denial and minimization to "get past" the race issue. . . .

Christ called people to coexist with him and each other differently but in doing so he did not employ a fuzzy mixture of denial, minimization, and separatism. He came against sin, the one thing he saw uniting people in their isolation from God, and he spoke candidly to that unpleasant truth, forging new alliances in the process. . . .

Robert A. Howard
Chico, CA

The Problem with Originalism

In the August/September Public Square ("Stemming the Epidemic Is Not Enough"), Richard John Neuhaus writes, "The job of judges is to interpret the Constitution accurately, which means to do so in an 'originalist' reading that respects what those who wrote and ratified it actually meant. . . . A faithful reading of what the Constitution says . . . must of necessity attend to the moral principles embraced by its authors, including the Declaration's 'We hold these truths . . . '"

Originalism is seductive to thoughtful conservatives because it gives judges an impartial method for rendering judgment. But originalism, like all excuses for judicial review, ultimately reveals its contempt for democracy.

Take the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment as an example. An originalist judge may be persuaded that its intent is to create a "color-blind society." Hence he would strike down any city or state policy that considered race in government hiring or public university admissions. But such an action would be justified only when current federal civil rights law may apply to the case. A strict reading of the Constitution, one that doesn't read things into it that aren't there, cannot by itself strike down affirmative action laws in the states, no matter how immoral or unjust they might be. Regardless of what its authors intended, equal protection under the law does not mean equal distribution of privileges and benefits. Why conservatives consistently applaud the Court's bans on affirmative action is beyond me.

My problem with invoking the moral understanding of the authors is, in the end, a moral objection. As in the above example, it still leaves room for judges to read things into the Constitution that aren't there, to suggest that the meaning of the document is something more than what it says. The truth is, our elected leaders also hold the job of interpreting the Constitution accurately, and if they are wrong, we can remove them. When the Constitution is unclear, who is to decide, a judge discerning what James Madison et al. really meant, or the people? Madison himself would choose the people. Denying the people the opportunity to interpret the Constitution and decide the public good is one of the greatest political evils. Each time the Court prevents public action on an issue, the cancer on the republican soul spreads; we are encouraged to be concerned not with the good of the whole but only with ourselves.

Our forefathers improved on the model of the British Constitution in many ways, but they failed to adequately rest authority over the Constitution in the people alone by providing political remedies for the Court's errors. This is a great tragedy that keeps repeating itself.

James L. Wilson
Chicago, IL

RJN replies:

I agree on the priority of the political over the judicial, but that does not leave courts without some role in interpreting the Constitution. That judges should "attend to the moral principles" means, minimally, that they should not discover that the Constitution requires things that contradict what we can assuredly know were the principles of those who wrote and ratified it. But yes, where the Constitution is unclear, the courts should defer to the people. Mr. Wilson's thoughtful letter underscores that neither "originalism" nor any other catchword does justice to the many aspects of constitutional interpretation.

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This Time

Nice People and the Rest of Us

James Nuechterlein

Politics in the West has in recent years lost much of its ideological edge. The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe between 1989 and 1991 has had a continuing ripple effect on political developments elsewhere. Progressives of all stripes have watched with dismay—and a deep sense of the unfairness of it all—as the left has come under blanket suspicion. Socialists, social democrats, and left-liberals of various kinds have found themselves hard-pressed to resist a tide of free-market enthusiasm that has made collectivism more suspect and economic conservatism more successful than at any time since the Great Depression. Politicians of the left who have managed to resist the conservative tide—Bill Clinton in America and Tony Blair in Britain most notably—have done so only by turning their backs on leftist doctrines (except on social issues) and accepting as their own, with minor modifications, traditional conservative prescriptions.

Michael Walzer of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton—and a committed man of the left—is among the many liberal academics unhappy with this development. Writing in the March 24, 1997 issue of *The New Republic*, he argues that the loss of a distinctive left is bad not just for the left but for the health of democracy. "Partisan division is not only important in democratic politics, it is vital. Without ideologically distinct intellectuals and politicians publicly debating issues . . . democracy eventually deteriorates into static centrism and even authoritarianism."

The politics of centrist muddle is, he thinks, more advanced in the U.S. than in Britain. In the UK, the admittedly opportunistic Blair "is constrained by a political base—that is, by an organized constituency committed to partisan ideals." "Though Blair has lifted some of Labor's old leftist constraints, he is still tied to a real political party with historic commitments to equality and solidarity. By contrast, our own 'left' politicians increasingly have no such ties. The Democratic Party's disintegration has left Bill Clinton practically free-floating."

Party ties have not deteriorated as badly, Walzer notes, among American conservatives. "Republicans today are a little more circumscribed; they still have to answer to their base, which is why their politics often seem more principled than Clinton's. The Republican revolution of 1994 turned out to have only minority support, but this was, and still is, a well-organized minority. American democracy would be better served if there were a similar organization on the liberal left. (Before stagnating, the labor movement once played that critical role.) Political debate would be more substantive if that were the case, and, just possibly, there would be less room for the personal attacks and negative advertising that increasingly scar our political life. Indeed, personalities figure so largely in American politics because parties figure so little."

The American left, bereft of leadership, has become featureless. "What is the liberal-left position on immigration or welfare reform or health care? Where are the Democrats committed to explaining and defending this position? Try to paint a portrait of the American political landscape, and the whole left side of the canvas would be a virtual blank: a few figures, a huddled group, standing, isolated, in the near distance."

Bill Clinton's short-term successes, in Walzer's view, have come at too great a cost. "Bipartisanship has been a useful strategy for defusing the Republican revolution. I suppose that is Clinton's excuse: he . . . is avoiding a crackdown . . . on poor, weak, and vulnerable men and women. Or, if not quite avoiding the crackdown, at least reducing its impact. But avoidance and reduction make for shortsighted politics. Without an alternative vision, without a robust democratic debate, without strongly based partisanship, our politics lurches from one scandal to the next—while the country steadily drifts rightward, where all the partisan fervor is."

Despite the left's recent dissembling, Walzer thinks that fundamental distinctions between left and right still obtain. "What marks the partisan left is a commitment to equality and a strong sense of solidarity with people in trouble. What marks the partisan right is a commitment to social and economic distinction and a deep admiration for independent, self-sufficient individuals—who, as a matter of principle, don't get into trouble. . . . Radically different understandings of the uses of state power, the limits of market freedom, the rights and responsibilities of citizens, and the extent of the welfare system all follow from these two partisan positions."

One needn't be a cynic to suspect that Mr. Walzer's concern over the decline in ideological clarity in our politics would be less urgent if it were the right, rather than the left, that was in full retreat. I do not recall a similar worry for the health of democracy among liberal academics when, in earlier periods, it was the "whole *right* side" of the American political landscape that remained "a virtual blank: a few figures, a huddled group, standing, isolated, in the near distance."

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Be that as it may, the most striking part of Walzer's analysis is his definition of the distinguishing characteristics of left and right: the left is marked by "a commitment to equality and a strong sense of solidarity with people in trouble," while conservatives are devoted to "social and economic distinction and a deep admiration for independent, self-sufficient individuals . . . who, as a matter of principle, don't get into trouble." One might as well say that liberals are nice people and conservatives are not. The problem here is not so much with Mr. Walzer's categories as with his tendentious way of describing them.

Begin with equality. As Walzer is too sophisticated not to know, the issue is not equality as such, but what kind of equality. American conservatives typically embrace the principles of equal moral dignity, equality before the law, and equality of opportunity. Where they differ with the left is over its zealous pursuit of equality of condition. Conservatives do not, contrary to Walzer's suggestion, seek out "social and economic distinction," but they do accept social and economic differences as natural products of a free society. People differ in ability and effort, and conservatives do not suppose, as those on the left habitually do, that inequality necessarily suggests inequity. It may or may not, and justice consists in constructing careful rules for marking the difference.

"Solidarity" is an even more problematic category than equality. We are all called to concern for "people in trouble," but the form that concern should take in public policy is by no means self-evident. Like many on the left, Walzer appears to confuse the demands of charity and justice. As his fellow liberal, Mickey Kaus, has written, "Compassion isn't politics." When people in need of particular government assistance turn to Washington for help, Kaus says, "it is (or should be) as self-reliant citizens, and it's a terrible mistake to mix up their plight with the 'weak and unfortunate' charity cases. Charity is a noble impulse. But it is not the relation of free, equal citizens."

Social welfare policies constitute an essential element of decent government, but such policies must always be administered with careful regard for their effects on their recipients and on the common good. We want to be, as Kaus notes—and as conservatives regularly emphasize—a society of free and equal citizens, not one of benefactors and dependents. There will always be those among us who cannot care for themselves and to whom we owe support and solidarity, but a society that in ordinary circumstances views any substantial portion of its citizenry essentially as "people in trouble" has succumbed to a muddled and demeaning public philosophy.

That explains why Mario Cuomo's celebrated "society as family" speech to the Democratic National Convention in 1984 was, however eloquent, fundamentally misguided. We love and sacrifice for our families without regard to anyone's deserving. We owe them that because they are family. It is political madness to suggest that we owe everyone in society in the same measure. Love may motivate our participation in the public square, but it cannot provide the substance of our politics. Love gives without counting the costs. A politics that doesn't count costs is feckless and irresponsible.

The left has always prided itself on its moral superiority to the right (we are compassionate, you are callous), and Michael Walzer's essay indicates that the situation has not changed. But Mr. Walzer and others like him might reflect more deeply than they seem to have done on the implications of the collapse of socialism. The world has not overnight turned hardhearted. If there is today a near universal suspicion of the politics of the left, that reflects not a failure of moral imagination but a commonsense recognition that collectivist ethics, like collectivist economics, simply runs contrary to the way the world works. FT

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Opinion

The Problem with Salad Bowl Religion

Jon D. Levenson

"I wonder what my rebbe ancestors would think of me," writes a young Unitarian Universalist minister in *The Burning Bush*, the newsletter of the Unitarian Universalists for Jewish Awareness. "Would they be glad for me, proud of me, or shocked at me to hear me recite a *bracha*, a blessing on Friday night, and then see me in church on Sunday in my robes and stole which has on it a Jewish star and also crosses, symbols of Greek paganism and of nature, a depiction of a deity and a goddess no less?" According to a report in the *Forward*, a Jewish weekly, other Unitarians are asking the same question as they build sukkot (booths for use in the Feast of Tabernacles), conduct Passover seders, light Hanukkah candles, and participate in their own "High Holiday" services, including blowing the shofar and some observances of Yom Kippur.

It might be argued that this degree of syncretism is likely to appear only in a church that esteems open-mindedness and free thought as much as Unitarian Universalism and, likewise, that this porousness to Jewish observances is a function of the high proportion of Unitarians who were born Jews (estimated at 8 or 9 percent, about four times the national figure). The current moderator of the UU Association, Denise Davidoff, herself raised in Conservative Judaism, describes her church as "post-Christian" and thus an attractive option for intermarried couples searching for a "compromise between a Christian denomination and Judaism."

There is strong reason to believe, however, that although the degree of syncretism among Unitarian Universalists is extreme, the phenomenon itself is increasingly common. Churches sponsoring Passover seders are not so unusual today (even apart from the special case of the so-called "messianic" congregations), and one need only browse in the "Religion" or "Spirituality" sections of popular bookstores to recognize how eclectic and syncretistic the religious self-definition of Americans has become.

The arguments for this new situation are familiar. Rituals, after all, are hardy perennials that migrate from one community to another with remarkable ease. Sacrificing a yearling lamb, cleaning out old foodstuffs in the spring, or eating unleavened bread—characteristics of the observance of the biblical Passover—may actually predate the story of the exodus from Egypt to which they became attached. One will not find Christmas trees in the New Testament, but something very like them among Germanic pagans, and the celebration of December 25 as Jesus' birthday dates only to the fourth century and was doubtless influenced by the Roman feast of the nativity of *Sol Invictus*, the Sun Triumphant. Lighting candles about the time of the winter solstice is not unique to those celebrating Hanukkah or Christmas.

In short, religious rituals and institutions have a life of their own and often survive the demise of one culture to live on in another, attaching themselves to new communities and new stories. The claim that any community has exclusive title to its ritual performances and appurtenances, its terminology and its music, flies in the face of the religious experiences of mankind. All historians need do to rebut the claim that a given practice is foreign to the tradition is to point out the foreign origins of so many practices already in place. Confronted with these historicist arguments, traditionalism can be made to seem like nothing more than an emotional weakness, a fear of the unfamiliar, or a set of aesthetic preferences without a philosophical rationale, in short, merely a matter of personal taste.

The syncretistic position, in contrast, can be made to seem bold and uninhibited, a welcoming of the new and the excluded into a larger and more inclusive community in which everyone can find affirmation and no one need renounce his past. This last point is especially attractive to Jews who have become involved in mixed marriages, since doing so has traditionally been seen as a sin and an act of betrayal and is increasingly characterized by Jewish survivalists as the suicide of their people. The feelings of guilt and shame involved in a Jew's intermarriage can be mitigated or even eliminated by offering a chance to increase one's "Jewish awareness" (as in Unitarian Universalists for Jewish Awareness) and even to adopt Jewish observances together with the gentile spouse in a more inclusive worshiping community. Given the differing backgrounds of spouses, by far the easiest resolution is the additive one—to include elements of both traditions, giving little or no thought to how they fit together to form any sort of integrated structure. (Even raising the question may be dismissed as imperialistic or patriarchal.)

The social motivations of syncretism should not be underestimated. The exponential increase in the rates of all kinds of intermarriage in America and the general decline in ethnicity have added a powerful

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impetus to this additive resolution to religious conflict. Indeed, those who suggest that the elements of various religious traditions cannot fit together with integrity are sometimes characterized as the theological equivalent of supporters of the antimiscegenation laws of yore. Just as there are no pure races, we are told, so are there no pure religions.

Powerful intellectual currents, many of them of secular provenance, also contribute to the diffusion and vitality of religious syncretism. Postmodernists tend to doubt the existence both of a self perduring through time and of an external reality that constrains definition and interpretation. With these ideological weapons in their armamentarium, postmodernists are well-positioned to deconstruct all claims of irrevocable identity and exclusive allegiance. Ms. Davidoff, the Unitarian moderator of Jewish origin, understands why some rabbis are upset at her church's use of Jewish ritual, according to the *Forward*, but she insists nonetheless that such exclusivity is "not how the postmodern world works. The world is becoming a mixed bag—a 'salad bowl.' More people hyphenate their beliefs."

Putting the matter this way disguises a critical fact: the belief in the legitimacy of hyphenation is not itself hyphenated, but pure, not some pragmatic compromise (like the Unitarian attempt at a compromise between Judaism and Christianity), but a substantive position in its own right. And the foundation of that position is the claim that, in matters of religious belief and practice, personal preference is supreme, not only empirically but also normatively. Ms. Davidoff's rabbinical critics do not doubt the *existence* of hyphenation any more than she does. What they doubt is its *legitimacy*.

The basis for that doubt within the world of Jewish law is not hard to find. *Halakhah* forbids Jews to engage in mixed worship, just as it forbids them to enter into mixed marriages (i.e., marriages with people of gentile origin who have not converted). We can answer with great certainty the young Unitarian minister's query with which we began. Her "rebbe ancestors" would be repelled and gravely disappointed to see her in church on Sunday wearing crosses and symbols of Greek paganism and goddesses.

But there is a deeper and more theological objection to syncretism that can be developed out of classical rabbinic sources. Consider this statement in the Talmud: "Greater is he who performs a given act because he is commanded than he who performs the same act without being commanded." One might have thought the opposite, that it is better to act in response to inner rather than outer forces, that to be moral, a deed must be, as Kant claimed, freely chosen and not heteronomous. To be sure, in classic rabbinic theology, intention, motivation, and feeling are also important, but the statement quoted above subordinates all of these to obedience, specifically obedience to God's *mitzvot* (commandments) as these are codified in *halakhah*.

At the deepest level, an act performed in order to subordinate one's own will to the will of God is vastly different from the identical act performed in pursuit of other goals—self-expression, aesthetic pleasure, familial nostalgia, ethnic identification, whatever. The motivation, of course, is not transparent, and if we go only by appearances, syncretistic worship that includes Jewish elements looks like a hyphenation of traditional Judaism with other things. In fact, it is only the *semblances* of the Jewish observance that have been imported. Their deeper authorization—the unique claims of the Covenant of Sinai upon the people Israel—have been tacitly but thoroughly denied.

One should not disparage, nor does rabbinic theology disparage, the worth of a good deed performed with less than the ideal intention. As the behaviorists have taught us, actions can change attitudes. The matter is different, however, when actions are seen as self-contained and questions of attitude, theology, and normativity are marginalized or negated altogether. Not every Jew can immediately put into practice the deeper import of the injunction in the Mishnah that one "should first take upon himself the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven and [only] afterward take upon himself the yoke of the commandments." But when the action specified by the commandment is performed indefinitely without reference to the Kingdom of Heaven, the term "commandment" itself becomes misleading, and we are left with a mere semblance of a Jewish observance without sustenance from the deepest sources of Judaism.

The result is something like what Abraham Joshua Heschel called "religious behaviorism," only much more extreme. Whereas religious behaviorism "stresses the external compliance with the law and disregards the importance of inner devotion," syncretistic appropriation of Jewish rituals extracts the actions from the law altogether, rendering them subordinate to individual choice and leaving the question of inner devotion altogether subject to personal whim. It mistakes the appearance of a religious act for the act itself.

This problem with the religious "salad bowl" is not without its counterparts in religions other than Judaism. The analogy may not be precise, but I recently heard a minister from a liberal Protestant denomination tell how moved he was when, after years of visiting a Roman Catholic monastery, the abbot unexpectedly invited him to join the monks in taking communion. One must wonder whether the minister did not misinterpret his experience. Without having accepted the Roman Catholic theology of the Eucharist—without having subordinated himself to the community authorizing the action—was he a

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communicant in a Roman Catholic Mass or was he only *impersonating* someone taking communion in a Roman Catholic Mass? The difference is not merely one of communal identification, although it has enormous implications for communal identity. It is a question of the larger structure of norms, including norms of faith and authority, that give a ritual its meaning in any tradition.

The most important question is not where various practices come from. No set of ritual performances is pure and primordial. The key point is where the practices end up: in what structure of authority have they become embedded, and in the service of what affirmation do they now stand? And will that authority still be obeyed and will that affirmation still be made when the price of doing so is inconvenience, monetary loss, personal anguish, persecution, or martyrdom? Hyphenated obedience is no obedience at all.

JON D. LEVENSON *is the Albert A. List Professor of Jewish Studies at Harvard Divinity School and the author, most recently, of* The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son *(Yale University Press) and* Esther: A Commentary *(Westminster/John Knox).*

Of Bible Codes and Idols

Benjamin Wittes

Just to set *t*he phrase "T*o*rah Code" he*r*e evenly sp*a*ced at ten c*h*aracters, I *c*onsumed a l*o*t of time an*d* misplaced *e*nergy. Putting nouns, verbs, and modifiers together in intelligible prose is hard enough, but trying at the same time to lace your prose with readable secret messages is guaranteed to tie you in knots: That first sentence, awkward as it is, took hours to compose.

If you believe a new bestseller, however, a code far more complex than mine snakes through the first five books of the Bible. This code, claims author Michael Drosnin, is far too elaborate to have been placed in the text by any human author; moreover, it predicts events that long postdate the composition of the Torah, events down to our own day, and thus seems to represent the Divine signature on the Old Testament.

Drosnin's *The Bible Code* would hardly be worth mentioning were it not such a smash hit. From its first pages, in which Drosnin (though he professes to be a nonbeliever) reports having warned Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of his impending assassination after the event was allegedly predicted in the Torah, it is a trivial, unsophisticated little book that merits no particular attention. In any long string of letters one can find countless anomalies that will seem like convincing proofs of hidden meaning to the mind that wants to believe that the text is somehow special. Numerological tricks, for example, can demonstrate that William Shakespeare wrote the King James Bible. Such tricks will sometimes yield correct statements (Rabin was killed), and will sometimes yield incorrect ones (Shakespeare did not write the King James Bible), and if you publish only the correct ones, you can make any text look pretty extraordinary. The point is that such gimmicks have absolutely no scientific meaning and prove nothing about the text in question. Yet Drosnin, like a child at a magic show, is so bowled over that the Torah seems to have predicted the Kennedy assassination, the Gulf War, and the Holocaust that he now suspects a nuclear apocalypse is coming down the pike any day because he's found a code for that too.

The only reason to pay any attention to *The Bible Code* is that some real mathematics does lie beneath at least part of it. To be sure, Drosnin has taken this research wholly out of context and turned it into a kind of theological parlor trick, but the research itself is not as laughable as critics like myself would like it to be. A group of serious researchers have examined an aspect of the codes claim, applying modern statistical methodologies to it, and they published their startling conclusions in one of the most prestigious journals in the field of statistics. Not only are certain embedded codes present in the Book of Genesis, they wrote, but their existence "is not due to chance."

Published in 1994 in a journal called *Statistical Science*, the paper on Torah codes describes a complex experiment in which computers scoured the Book of Genesis looking for evenly spaced sequences of letters spelling the names and birthdays of famous rabbis, all born centuries after Genesis was written. For all intents and purposes, the *Statistical Science* experiment would seem to prove—or at least strongly suggest—the existence of God. In other words, either this study contains a subtle error, or the world has discovered a long-hidden revelation of sorts. I believe there must be an error, yet the research on the Torah codes shook somewhat my agnosticism.

Once upon a time, science, philosophy, and theology were disciplines largely undifferentiated from one another, and proving the existence of God was a fairly commonplace intellectual exercise. But as the scientific method became increasingly refined, particularly through the nineteenth century, science and religion grew apart. To the modern mind, they now appear to exist on separate planes: by no means mutually exclusive, but not reinforcing one another either. Using the language of science to prove one's God is generally considered, by scientist and priest

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alike, somewhat disreputable. Excepting the biblical literalist who promotes "creation science" and the occasional snake-oil salesman with a numerological proof of God's majesty, modern minds have largely accepted Kierkegaard's famous maxim that "the only proof there is is faith."

Skepticism about the Torah codes is certainly justified, and it is tempting simply to dismiss them as just one more cleverly presented snake-oil. The codes, known as "equidistant letter sequences" (ELS), are being promoted by a Jewish religious academy known as *Aish Hatorah*, which specializes in bringing secular Jews back to traditional Orthodox practice. *Aish* partisans commonly haunt the Western Wall, inviting tourists to their home base in Jerusalem to entice them to Orthodoxy with lectures about, among other things, the codes. Many people I know would rest easier at night if science could trash the codes and restore the twentieth century's equilibrium between faith and knowledge.

I confess myself to be among this group. I personally have no desire for *Statistical Science* (let alone Drosnin) to be the bearer of metaphysical truths, and I readily admit rooting for those scientists working to find a flaw in the paper. Acquaintances of mine have become Orthodox because of the codes; I know of one man who waited until *Statistical Science* agreed to publish the article before circumcising his son. But mainstream Orthodox Judaism has so far regarded the codes as irrelevant to the essence of rabbinic Judaism: the Divine commandments given by God at Mount Sinai. Quite simply, the codes claim is so fantastical that dismissing it as a piece of intellectual knavery may just be the most reasonable, as well as the most comfortable, solution for religious and secular people alike.

Except that this bit of intellectual knavery might just be the Truth.

The root of the belief in the codes is the almost unfathomable theological premise that the Torah, a set of five books of limited length, contains literally all truth. "According to the tradition," explains Daniel Mechanic, a rabbi who lectures on the codes for *Aish Hatorah*'s traveling Discovery Seminar, "all of history—including the most minute details of the lives of every human being—is contained in the Torah." As codes enthusiasts eagerly point out, the Vilna Gaon, the great eighteenth-century rabbi from Lithuania, wrote that the Torah contains all truth "not merely in a general sense, but including the details of every species and of each person individually."

The belief that the Torah contains encrypted messages dates back at least to the medieval practitioners of the Kabbalah. The Kabbalists had some awareness of the possibility of ELS-coding, one of eighty-four coding schemes they located in the Torah. But the current emphasis on ELS results from work this century, together with a new observation that pairs of conceptually related words tend to occur near one another in the Torah.

True believers have spent hours counting out ciphers that appear to have mystical significance. Count a sequence skipping fifty letters from the first Hebrew T (called a Taf) in Genesis, for example, and you'll find the word "Torah." Do the same in Exodus, and you'll find it again. (This ELS, however, doesn't appear in the same fashion in the Torah's other three books.)

But how do you test whether an ELS in the Torah is a meaningful embedded code or mere coincidence? Any text of sufficient length will contain a myriad of accidental ELSs, and if you look hard enough, you can find sequences that say all kinds of strange things. Yet such happenstances are profoundly different from, for example, the sequence I intentionally embedded in the opening sentence of this article. One is a meaningless accident, however mystically important it might seem. The other is an intentionally encoded message that can be plumbed for meaning.

To test whether the codes in the Torah were intentional, three Israeli scientists designed the elaborate experiment on which Drosnin is now cashing in. Eliyahu Rips of Hebrew University's mathematics department, along with researchers Doron Witztum and Yoav Rosenberg, used computers to examine the Book of Genesis for ELSs that name thirty-two famous rabbis and their dates of birth or death. Because the rabbis on the list were all born long after Genesis was written, no human author could possibly have deliberately encoded their names and dates into the text. Moreover, the rabbis were chosen according to an arbitrary criterion, so the scientists were apparently not looking for names they already knew to be present. As a control, the authors performed the exact same experiment on several scrambled versions of Genesis, on the Book of Isaiah (which, while biblical, is not a book of the Torah), and on a Hebrew translation of *War and Peace*.

If the phenomenon were due merely to chance, the authors reasoned, they would be as likely to find an ELS naming Rabbi X near one identifying the birthday of Rabbi Y as they would be to find X near his own date. But while this was true for the control texts, it wasn't true for Genesis. In Genesis, rather, the rabbis were not only mostly present in ELSs, but they tended to appear closer to their own dates than to the dates of one another. When the Witztum group analyzed these findings, they found there was only a one in fifty thousand possibility that such a coding scheme could have occurred as a result of chance.

These incredible results were published after they passed peer review in *Statistical Science*. The mere fact of their publication is remarkable, and the editors of the journal were apparently aware of just how

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peculiar their decision to publish the paper was. "Our referees were baffled: their prior beliefs made them think the Book of Genesis could not possibly contain meaningful references to modern-day individuals, yet when the authors carried out additional analyses and checks the effect persisted," wrote the journal's editors. "The paper is thus offered to *Statistical Science* readers as a challenging puzzle."

Nobody has yet solved the puzzle, if solving it means proving a serious flaw in the experiment and refuting the original. But various statisticians and mathematicians are examining the experiment for flaws that could nullify the apparent effect. The most serious challenge to the published work has come from a group of Australian and Israeli researchers, led by mathematician Brendan McKay. McKay has replicated the experiment and claims to have found serious flaws in it. McKay's draft report notes that the effect described in Genesis does not appear to exist in the other four books of the Torah. Moreover, he identifies a number of highly technical problems with the experiment that, he says, render it meaningless. His group has also demonstrated that wholly unscientific results like Drosnin's can be gleaned from all sorts of texts, and the group is planning a paper that will systematically critique the original one.

I suspect this paper will begin to put the scientific questions about Torah codes to rest, but the critique has not yet undergone the rigorous peer review that the original paper withstood. In other words, a significant scientific debate is taking place between the codes' proponents and their skeptics—a debate not aided by popularizers who cash in on the phenomenon.

Indeed, compared to Drosnin, *Aish Hatorah* seems positively restrained in its claims. According to Rabbi Mechanic, the codes cannot be read as any sort of window on the Torah's inner meaning: "They have nothing to do with the religion, nothing to do with spirituality. All they can do is validate the hypothesis that the author of the Torah is not human."

But this is hardly nothing. Indeed, if the reported effect proves real, the codes present a profound challenge. And however the argument over the *Statistical Science* article shakes out, the Torah codes' discovery seems fundamentally unlike any previous claim that science has validated a metaphysical phenomenon. No claims of alien abduction or demonic possession have ever so robustly withstood examination as the Torah codes now have. Moreover, until they ultimately prove illusory, we have to consider the possibility that we can know for sure that God really did write the Torah. What then?

The Torah, after all, is rife with examples of people who are certain of God's presence and who nonetheless disobey His decrees. In Exodus, for example, Moses leads the children of Israel to the foot of Mount Sinai, where God reveals Himself and gives them the Torah. These Israelites stare with their own eyes at irrefutable evidence of the presence of God. Yet by the end of Exodus—only a few scraps of parchment later—they dance in ecstatic worship around a golden calf. If the codes phenomenon proves real—bolstered by the best methodologies with which science normally attacks mysticisms—how many of us will renounce our secular lives and fall down in worship, and how soon will we leap up again to dance around the idols of modernity?

BENJAMIN WITTES *covers the Justice Department for* Legal Times.

Untangling Evolution

Stephen M. Barr

There's no denying that historically evolution has been harmful to religious faith. It has contributed to undermining confidence in Scripture and to promoting a naturalistic view of man. In our own age, such atheists as Daniel Dennett, Richard Dawkins, Stephen Jay Gould, and Carl Sagan have claimed that natural selection destroys the Argument from Design and with it any reason to believe in God. But if we can set aside the historical effect of the theory of evolution—and set aside the theological meanderings of those who want to use the theory as a stick with which to beat religion—we can find that nothing in the theory itself creates intellectual difficulties for Christian or Jewish belief. Evolution raises important questions for faith, but not difficulties.

In *The Blind Watchmaker,* Dawkins argues that natural selection can give "design without design." The "watch" of the title refers to the famous argument of William Paley, and in this context stands for the intricate structures to be found in the biological world, which many think give proof of a divine Maker. There is no maker, says Dawkins, except the universe itself—his "blind watchmaker."

To eliminate design, as Dawkins would do, one must have some mechanism that produces form from formlessness, order from chaos. But no scientific explanation does this. Science explains order by deriving it from order. Consider the formation of crystals, an oft-cited example of the spontaneous emergence of order. The patterns exhibited by crystals are a reflection of underlying symmetries and principles of order that apply to the atoms them-

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selves, to the space in which they move, and to the laws that govern their behavior. These, in turn, can be traced to deeper levels of physical law. No matter how profoundly one penetrates into the hidden workings of the world, it is not some formless flux that is encountered, but ever more remarkable and beautiful structure.

And this is just the point. To have evolution one must have a universe. And not just any universe will do. Rather, it is beginning to appear that the laws of nature must be carefully arranged. The facts of evolution, like the facts of reproduction, are no less astonishing for being natural. If they are natural we should be astonished at the laws of nature. What immortal hand or eye framed *their* fearful symmetry? Perhaps none, if the laws themselves also evolved by some process analogous to natural selection. But that would put us back where we started, since any such process must itself have been governed by laws of some kind.

The Argument from Design remains perfectly healthy, then, even if we concede to natural selection all that is claimed for it by the most naturalistic theory of evolution. But, as it happens, there is no reason to concede so much to it. It is far from clear that natural selection is really up to the job, not only of crafting complex organisms, but even of explaining what goes on in the simplest living cell, as the molecular biologist Michael J. Behe has amply demonstrated in his recent book, *Darwin's Black Box*. Moreover, the times available for natural selection to have worked these wonders were far shorter than was commonly supposed. The Cambrian Explosion, that wild proliferation of new forms of life that occurred about 540 million years ago, took only a few million years. And it is now generally admitted that most species make their appearance in the fossil record quite suddenly, geologically speaking.

Unfortunately, many religious believers—and not only biblical literalists—have taken this argument one step further than it has to be or ought to be taken, to deny that life on earth has a common ancestry. I find this quite puzzling. If it can be shown that a reptile cannot evolve into a mammal or a fish into an amphibian by natural selection alone, then there must have been divine intervention. Nothing is added to the force of this argument by denying that the reptile or the fish did so evolve. The atheist is out on a limb, so why try to saw down the whole tree, especially against the grain of so much evidence?

The evidence for the common ancestry of life is very strong. To give some idea of what it is, I will simply list a few of the kinds of questions that common ancestry gives an answer to. Why is it that bats and whales have so much in common anatomically with mice and men? Why do virtually all vertebrate forelimbs have the same basic "pentadactyl" (five-fingered) design? (This is one of numerous examples of "homologous" structures exhibited by related species.) Why do some species of whales have vestigial and quite useless pelvic and leg bones, when they have no pelvises or legs? Why are all mammals native to Australia marsupials? Why is there a sequence of reptiles in the fossil record (the "therapsids") with a clear progression from reptilian to mammalian characteristics? Why does the record of life on earth show a clear trend towards greater complexity? Why is it found that the most ancient bird fossils are reptilian, and the most ancient whales have feet? Why do salamander embryos have gills and fins that they will never use?

The point in asking these and many similar questions is not only that common ancestry can answer them, but more significantly that no real answer on any other basis has been found to any of them. (There is certainly no *theological* explanation of why bats, humans, frogs, and lizards all have five fingers.)

Unanticipated discoveries in various fields have strengthened the case for common ancestry. The theory of plate tectonics and continental drift resolved a number of evolutionary puzzles (though some remain, such as the existence of the platyrrhine monkeys of South America). And dramatic confirmation has come from gene and protein sequencing. Particularly striking is the phenomenon of "molecular clocks." (This refers to data obtained by comparing certain proteins and nucleic acids in different species. It is found that the variation of these molecules from species to species over a vast taxonomic range exhibits patterns that are hard to explain unless one assumes that the molecular degree of difference between two species is in some cases a measure of the period of time that they have been evolving separately—that is, since they had a common ancestor.)

Let us suppose not only that evolution (that is, the common ancestry of all life on earth) is true, as I think the evidence shows, but that natural selection is a sufficient mechanism for it, which the evidence does not show. What difficulties would that create for religious belief? Unfortunately, the issues are sometimes clouded by a failure to make distinctions.

The critical distinction is between divine intervention and the other ways God acts. By "intervention" I mean something that goes beyond the order of nature, an effect produced by God in the world that contravenes either the laws of nature or the laws of probability. Intervention is not to be confused with providence. While faith tells us that all events are governed by providence, divine intervention is rare. Even events in which we think we can discern the hand of providence do not usually involve anything beyond what is naturally possible. A child's voice in a garden is nothing extraordinary, and yet St. Augustine heard such a voice and it changed the course of history.

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Creation means that God brings into existence all that is, and providence and design mean that He orders all that is. These concepts do not necessarily imply intervention. It is true that the account of the creation of plants and animals in Genesis is suggestive of intervention: there is no mention there of natural processes (unless they are hinted at when Genesis says that the earth and waters "brought forth" the various living creatures). But Genesis describes the creation of the sun and stars in a way that is even more suggestive of divine intervention. (The firmament does not "bring forth" the sun; God "sets" it there.) Yet modern astrophysics has an adequate naturalistic explanation of the formation of the sun and stars, which is not challenged even by most of those who question evolution.

The sun is an ordinary star, and there are many billions like it. But if the laws of nature were in certain respects even slightly different, no such stars would exist, and hence life as we know it would not exist either. Even apart from faith, therefore, we can recognize the role of providence and design in the existence of the sun and stars, although it is now clear that no intervention was required to produce them.

There are those who argue, nevertheless, that a consistent—or at least a full-blooded—theism requires intervention for the production of living things, since the alternative to intervention is a "naturalism" based on "blind forces" and "chance." "Naturalism" can be the denial that anything whatever goes beyond the nature of material things. Such naturalism denies a priori even the possibility of divine intervention, because it denies the existence of God. But not all naturalism is of this kind. There is also a naturalism whose opposite is the prescientific view of nature that one finds among primitive peoples. This naturalism is based on true progress in knowledge of the physical world. Science finds no signs of divine intervention in the realm of inanimate matter. In astrophysics, geology, chemistry, or plasma physics, for example, one does not encounter the miraculous.

In the human sphere things are different. Both faith and reason tell us that man has a spiritual soul, and therefore that purely naturalistic accounts of human realities are false. We believe, as well, that divine intervention has happened in human affairs, in particular in the miraculous events of salvation history.

Since the world of plants and animals is intermediate between the human and the inanimate, it is not obvious whether we should expect to find signs of intervention there. Ironically, there are stronger grounds for expecting it if human beings did evolve. If there had to be reptiles for there later to be men, then it would seem quite in character (if one may speak so) for God to have intervened to produce reptiles, by arranging, say, the necessary mutations or selective pressures.

On the other hand, one might expect no intervention in those parts of the biological world that do not involve man in any significant way. There is an excellent book called *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, which has deservedly become a classic of the anti-Darwinian literature. (It presents the arguments for evolution with exemplary fairness and honesty, and it should be noted that its author, Michael Denton, has since come to believe in evolution.) Among many other fascinating things, one can find in this book a discussion of the copulatory apparatus of the male dragonfly, which is apparently a prodigy of complexity and quite unique in the insect world. How, Denton asked, could such a thing have been produced by natural selection? That question is difficult to answer, but maybe no more so than the following one: Why would God, Who so rarely intervenes in nature, do so to produce a unique way for dragonflies to copulate?

A clergyman at a conference on the subject of creation, overhearing me pose this question, inquired with some slight sarcasm whether I had received any telegrams from the Almighty answering it. But I do not think it necessarily absurd to ask what God would be likely to do, for though God's ways may often seem inexplicable to us, God is not arbitrary. I believe that Isaiah foretold future events. But I do not believe that Jeanne Dixon was able to do so. God's interventions have followed a pattern, and Jeanne Dixon does not fit it. A presumption in favor of a natural explanation in a particular case, then, can be a result of theological considerations, rather than of atheistic or materialistic presuppositions.

There is much talk on both sides about "blind forces" in connection with evolution. But there is nothing in such an idea that should shock a Christian or Jew. It is not the forces of nature that see, but God. Indeed, it is precisely the blindness of nature that allows us to recognize that events must be guided by something beyond nature, by providence rather than by fate, or destiny, or occult forces. The blindness of nature argues against pantheism and all of nature-worship ancient and modern, not against theism. The idea that God works His will through blind agents is as biblical as the story of Joseph in the Old Testament. The notion of blind natural forces came not from a rejection of God, but of Aristotle, and in particular of his teleological physics. It was this that made modern science possible, and it did not result from a conflict between naturalism and supernaturalism, but from a conflict between two kinds of naturalism.

Similar ambiguities surround the notion of "chance." Evolutionists ascribe things to "random" mutations, and many feel that this in itself involves a denial of a rational cause or design. But the notions of chance, randomness, and probability are notoriously subtle. A simple example will illustrate this. It

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is well-known that the most common letter in English is "e," followed by "t," and then "a." These are statements about probabilities. As it happens, they hold true for the Gettysburg Address, as they do for most sufficiently long passages in English. But no one should doubt that Lincoln crafted this speech with great care, with every word—and consequently every letter—chosen to serve a purpose. By analogy, the fact that God's providence extends to every event in the universe does not imply that notions of chance and probability will not apply to them. The mutations that led from the first single-celled creature to the genus Homo may have been chance events from a certain point of view, but as Pope John Paul II has said, every one of them was foreseen and willed by God. (I hasten to add that none of this is to suggest that it has been shown that random mutations and natural selection are sufficient as a mechanism of evolution. As of this moment, I would say, the arguments favor those who deny this.)

What troubles most people about evolution is its application to human beings. One reason is that some think it degrading to have apes as ancestors. But it is not obviously more dignified to have come directly from slime. A deeper reason is the discontinuity that we know to exist between human beings and the rest of creation—between spirit and matter. Yet it is hard to see that this is more of an issue for evolution than it is for human reproduction. We are in no position to observe the immediate antecedents of Adam, but we know that those of each human child today were a sperm and an egg, which are without doubt purely material in themselves.

The real question is whether man is more than a mere arrangement of atoms. If he is, then it would seem to matter little how those atoms came to be arranged as they are, whether by natural processes of evolution or reproduction, or by supernatural intervention. Pope John Paul II and Pope Pius XII have indicated the essential point: As long as we maintain the scriptural and philosophical truth that man has a spiritual nature, there can be nothing to fear in merely biological facts.

It is otherwise for the atheist. It is his faith that is at stake in this controversy, not ours. His faith requires that chance and natural law must be adequate to explain the facts of evolution. If they do not appear to be adequate, he must nevertheless insist that they are. It is for him, then, to dogmatize about strictly scientific matters, not for us. We can be content, and should be content, to be guided only by the evidence.

Stephen M. Barr *is Associate Professor of Physics at the Bartol Research Institute, University of Delaware.*

America's Messiah

Michael Linton

For musicians, Christmas means Messiah. This is not a comment upon musicians' religiosity, but rather upon their finances. Messiah, Handel's *Messiah,* is to America's choral societies and orchestras what *La Bohème* is to its opera houses and *Nutcracker* to its ballets: the guaranteed full house that can bankroll a whole season of deficits. Between Thanksgiving and New Year's, Handel's oratorio receives hundreds of performances, from church choirs with organ accompaniment to major symphonies with their professional choruses.

With over sixty recorded versions available, classic sections of music stores become at Christmas little more than appendages to tables stacked with *Messiahs*: early music versions, Mozart's reorchestrated version, Shaw's, Pinnock's, Marriner's. The "Christian-Contemporary music" crowd has even cashed-in with a pop version called "The Young Messiah" (a version that has roughly the same regard for the original as Attila the Hun had for historic preservation). The Lord Jesus may have had many things to say about mammon, but at Christmas at least, *Messiah* pays, and pays well.

But why, from Bangor to San Diego, do average Americans who would otherwise not listen to a note of classical music year after year make performances of this oratorio sell-outs? Why do they go? And what is the effect of *Messiah*'s popularity upon our musical culture?

Certainly the primary reason for the oratorio's appeal lies in the quality of Handel's music itself. *Messiah* must rank as one of the greatest musical achievements of the eighteenth century. For all its misuse (I particularly remember Mobil using it to hail their motor oil), the "Hallelujah Chorus" remains a masterpiece of musical structure, the magnificence of the music not being the result of bombast, but rather the logical outcome of Handel's manipulation of antiphonal effects, stunning unisons, divided familiar-style and contrapuntal writing, and superimposed textures. The final chorus ("Worthy is the Lamb") contains choral writing the imagination of which would not be rivaled until Wagner composed *Lohengrin* four generations later, and the aria "Behold and See" is a model of economy and pathos. In its fifteen measures Handel seems to set the anguish of the whole world.

But it's not just the music. Great though *Messiah* may be, it can be argued that Handel's best work lies elsewhere. With some justification, *cognoscenti* are quick to prefer his Italian operas to his English oratorios. During Handel's lifetime, *Judas Maccabaeus* was more popular than *Messiah,* and the Reverend

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Charles Jennens, who provided Handel with *Messiah*'s word book, liked the music in *Samson* much better. Late in life, the composer himself is reported to have said that his oratorio *Theodora* contained better writing. While *Messiah* is a masterpiece, it is but one of many from Handel's pen, masterpieces that have not endured so steadfastly as *Messiah*. Why?

I think the answer lies in the fact that for the last two hundred years, English-speaking Christianity, and in particular, American Christianity, has found a singularly eloquent vehicle for self-reflection in *Messiah*. Despite much talk to the contrary, religion remains deeply important to most Americans. But as many writers have noted, that religiosity is not denominational or even confessional in nature. Instead, it is individualistic, a matter of personal belief and individual choice not dictated by bishops, mediated by ritual, or regulated by the state. Furthermore, American Christianity is deeply eschatological, the sense of the impending eschaton being not so much a dread premonition of a coming doom, but rather a purposeful optimism. Americans work for and expect the eventual establishment of the kingdom of God, that "city on a hill."

Messiah speaks to such a Christianity. Although reminiscent of the lectionary texts from Advent through Trinity from the Book of Common Prayer, the oratorio cannot be said to be denominational (although the lack of passages dealing with Mary certainly gives it a distinctly Protestant cast). Its biblical texts are equally accessible to Episcopalians and National Baptists, Methodists and Pentecostals, and until fairly recently, could be said to be known by heart by almost all. Unlike Bach's cantatas and passions, the oratorio requires neither a liturgical setting nor a particular occasion for it to be grasped. And despite the current custom of abridged Christmas performances (an aberration largely the result of reduced attention spans), the oratorio is not seasonal. If the work points to anything at all, it is neither Christmas nor Easter but rather the Second Coming and the individual's faith in Christ's eventual triumph.

Messiah is a concert work for the concert hall, and very much in the mold of the modern Protestant sermon, which entertains its listener for the purpose of edifying him. Like his contemporary George Whitefield (who was also criticized for using theatrical devices for religious ends), Handel uses the conventions of the theater to compel his listener into a personal encounter with the scriptural texts. *Messiah*, contrary to most critics' readings, is highly dramatic. But its drama is an interior one, a personal confrontation between the individual listener and the story of salvation that Handel unfolds before him. To a population where that confrontation is the fulcrum of their lives, performances of *Messiah* become almost autobiographical.

It is because of the religious character of Americans that *Messiah* is so important here. And because of that religious character, it can be said that *Messiah* forms the foundation of America's art music culture. Not only do performances of the oratorio undergird the finances of many of the country's performing organizations, the work itself is the entrance of tens of thousands into the realm of classical music. It is not only the one classical piece that almost everyone will recognize (hence Madison Avenue's shameless exploitation of it), but in many cases it is the only major classical piece that most amateur musicians will themselves perform. My own case is not unusual. *Messiah* was the first piece of classical music I heard live, the first one I performed as an amateur singer, and the first one I conducted as a professional musician.

The cultural significance of Handel and his *Messiah* for American music cannot be overstated. But it is a significance not universally welcomed. For roughly a generation, there has been a movement among musicologists to de-Christianize Handel, a by-product of which would be the reduction of *Messiah* to just one more religious work by a composer who really knew better. In 1966, the biographer Paul Henry Lang felt compelled to invent a string of mistresses for Handel (thereby making him "normal"). In 1980, Winton Dean, while acknowledging the "sincerity" of Handel's Christian beliefs, concluded that he was really a pantheist and hedonist at heart. More recently, writers have argued for a homosexual Handel as part of a queer studies agenda for political and social revolution. Handel, a life-long bachelor, is proving to be fertile ground for a kind of airy scholarship that prefers virtuosic innuendo to unambiguous historic data.

The most generous thing one can say about the argument for the "gay" Handel is that it is interesting but tenuous in the extreme. But the stakes in the argument are high, for deconstructive musicology makes a farce of Western civilization by falsifying its contours. What is absolutely certain about Handel—from nearly all contemporaneous sources—is not his sexuality, but rather the blamelessness of his business dealings, the absence of gossip regarding his private life (remarkable for a man as much in the public eye as he was), and—particularly in his later years—the pronounced seriousness with which he took his religion. Very little of this informs the portrait of the "gay" Handel. But historic veracity is not really these writers' goal. Their interest is not in Handel the artist, but rather in Handel the tool, Handel the cog in a machine to denigrate traditional Western moral values. A chaste Christian Handel is of no use in such a campaign, but a gay pagan Handel, a closet libertine who wrote oratorios with whose texts he had no real engagement, very much would be.

"Handel" is a battlefield in the culture wars—in a

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way that Schubert isn't—because of *Messiah*. With a note of personal triumph, a colleague recently told of a Christian student who after taking his class on Handel said that she would never be able to listen to *Messiah* again. Score one for politicized scholarship. Of course that poor student was not only misinformed about Handel, but mistaken to value a work only because of the character of its creator. Yet there is a truth to her rejection. Try as we may, it isn't so easy to separate "the dancer from the dance." Should the revisionists be successful in promoting their deconstructed Handel, I suspect that the public attitude toward *Messiah* would be changed too. It also might not sell as well, and that certainly would be a pity.

Michael Linton *is head of the Division of Music Theory and Composition at Middle Tennessee State University.*

Nativity

if I lived in Seattle
at Christmastime
I'd have committed suicide

a long time ago

it's bad enough
as it is
each year
over and over again
in Bethlehem,
Pennsylvania
with the steel mills all shut down
and now the K-Marts are too

but I take down
nonetheless
each year at this time
the plaster of paris statuettes
of us,
myself and all the others
that I made

especially the baby

unwrap him from his swaddling
tissues
to place him in the cardboard creche

the other figurines I awake
from their
nearly yearlong
hibernation
place the ducks upon the looking glass

arrange the sheep
and cows
in nestled mute array about
the manger

to make the
perfect configuration
in space & time
just so

(will I get it right
this year . . . ?)

I install
the shepherds, wise men, and
the sundry angels who
remain aloof

while the baby's fathers
and I
look on in awe

and wonder
can this be me

it happens to
each year at this time

when
I see the pained reminders:

to be put away —
safe
in hibernation
well before Easter

but there's
Hope
with each new birth
that he won't have

to commit

Carl Winderl

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Christ and Creation's Longing

Richard John Neuhaus

In 1971, I published *In Defense of People*, the first book-length critique of "the ecology movement" that was then in ascendancy and that pretty much shaped the arguments that continue to swirl around the varieties of environmentalism today. There are significant differences between then and now. Then there was a thing called "the movement" (often capitalized as The Movement), which was a frequently confused mix of agitations coming out of the civil rights movement, joining up with opposition to the war in Vietnam, and linking hands with a "counter-culture" that embraced everything from pharmaceutical ecstasies to flirting with revolutionary violence. The movement with which I was identified had to do with racial justice and peace. I and others of like mind criticized the drug culture and related antics as a self-indulgent distraction from the goals of racial justice and peace, and worried that the new enthusiasm for "ecological consciousness" was in fact a conservative ploy designed to turn the movement away from the cause of the poor.

Put differently, by the end of the 1960s environmentalism was applying for full membership in the movement. Although there was no tidy definition of the movement's leadership, it was understood that the movement had the power to certify what was legitimately liberal—remembering that in those tumultuous days liberalism routinely called itself radical. *In Defense of People* was my argument that the ecology movement, if admitted at all, should be admitted on probation. I pointed out, among other things, that environmentalism had historically been an aristocratic and decidedly conservative cause. It had unsavory associations with anti-immigration and even eugenic enthusiasms, and betrayed a distinct distaste for common people whom, as Lincoln observed, God must love since he made so many of them. Hence the title of the book, *In Defense of People*.

My editor at Macmillan worried that the book might be making too much of the phenomenon, that all the talk about ecology was "a flash in the pan." Reviewers of the book in the *New York Times* and elsewhere opined that ecology was little more than a commonsensical concern for global housekeeping, and quite innocent of the far-reaching and rather alarming implications about which I warned. That, of course, was before the full-blown philosophies of "deep ecology" and "radical environmentalism" that are so much with us today. Suffice it that my argument did not carry the day, and environmentalism was admitted to full membership in the movement as an integral part of that cause of all causes, Social Change. Also in circles such as the World Council of Churches, environmentalism was patched on to the quilt of peace and justice, and presented as a seamless garment of progressive commitment.

In *Environmental Ethics and Christian Humanism*, Thomas Sieger Derr nicely summarizes the concern set out also in *In Defense of People*:

> Beyond their misunderstanding of the facts, beyond their tolerance of draconian solutions, the [environmental and population] controllers are finally accused of regarding people, at least when found in great numbers, as a kind of pollution. There is among them that dreadful elitist assumption of the wealthy and comfortable that lesser lives are not worth living. There is more than a touch of "first world" imperialism here, and it may explain why environmentalists are more excited about habitat and species protection than about human health in the poor nations: the human species is not endangered, and could use a little thinning out.

RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS *is Editor-in-Chief of* FIRST THINGS. *An earlier version of this essay appeared in* Environmental Ethics and Christian Humanism, *edited by Thomas Sieger Derr and published by Abingdon, 1997.*

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Over the years, Derr has demonstrated an almost heroic patience in attending to the literature of radical environmentalism, and responding to arguments point by point. It takes great patience because in fact the arguments have not substantively developed all that much. There is regular change of rhetoric, and the tocsin of environmental alarmism is sounded in different keys and with reference to different scientific (or pseudoscientific) claims, but the shape of the argument has not changed that much in the past quarter century. It was all there, at least in nascent form, in 1971 and, in fact, much earlier.

Readers who have not been paying close attention to these controversies may think that critics such as Derr are excessively harsh or unfair. On the contrary, they are charitable, almost to a fault. How should one respond to writers such as Paul Ehrlich whose stock in trade is reckless hyperbole and outright prevarication? What attitude should we take to the Garrett Hardins who claim to be intellectually and morally courageous in urging that we brace ourselves for the deliberate elimination of millions of expendable human beings? I fear it is a mark of the corruption of our intellectual and academic discourse that it is deemed necessary to respond to such people as though they are making arguments that intelligent and decent people must take seriously. In a saner world we would be less hesitant to say that some people are inveterate liars and moral barbarians, denizens of fever swamps far removed from the civilized world for which we are responsible. Regrettably, however, the fever swamps press in upon us, and we must attend to the dikes if the possibility of a human and humane world is to be preserved.

Yet there are also some urgent truths that are being badly mangled in the confused agitations of radical environmentalism or, as it is called, deep ecology. My purpose here is to attend to some of the philosophical and theological questions that inform, and deform, current debates.

Critics like Derr do not hesitate to describe their position as "anthropocentric." Against those who hold humanity in contempt, I, too, want to declare myself a humanist and join in the most elevated and elevating tradition of a culture that celebrates man as "the crown of creation." That humanism is a great and fragile achievement, the result of a long, bloody, and tortuous process that reaches from the end of slaughter of virgins in appeasement of vengeful gods to the abolition of slavery to the recognition of Auschwitz and the Gulag Archipelago as icons of the evil of which human beings are capable. Upon the historical achievements of this humanism depends the sustainability of a liberal democratic social order and the philosophy of human rights that undergirds that order. But I do not think we should call this humanism "anthropocentric."

Better we should speak of a theocentric perspective or, better yet, a theonomous perspective. The "theos" in question need not, at least in the first instance, speak of the One whom Christians call God. It does speak of that which transcends the human, of that which, to put it more cautiously, is not exhausted by the human. There is a correct intuition that wants to "situate" humanity within something greater than humanity. Man is not the only thing in the universe, and is not the greatest thing in the universe. Environmental thinkers are right about that. Humanity's dignity and grandeur are derived. The religious impulse, evident also in radical environmentalism, rightly recoils from making an idol of humanity. The "theos" points to the "other" from which human dignity and grandeur (and responsibility!) are derived.

In refusing to make an idol of humanity, some species of environmental thought make an idol of the universe itself. Nature becomes the theos, the other, the god (or, more frequently, the goddess). This is the result of a legitimate religious impulse gone astray. The Protestant ethicist James Gustafson keeps that impulse within a tighter discipline by his accent on the theocentric as distinct from the anthropocentric. Although the argument needs much more development than I can give it here, I would suggest that Gustafson's approach is insufficiently *Christ*-ian. Classical Christianity provides a more adequate way of "situating" humanity by reference to the God-Man, Jesus Christ. Theocentrism and anthropocentrism give way to Christology, the understanding that Jesus Christ is both true God and true man. In this Christocentric view, humanity is fully participant in an order best described as theonomous, a reality ordered by God and to God.

Nor is nature in any way left out of this theonomous order as it is Christocentrically constructed. This is evident in the New Testament passages found in Romans, Ephesians, Revelation, and elsewhere that underscore the "cosmic Christ." It is not simply Eastern Orthodoxy but the legacy of all Christians that lifts up the promise of the "deification" of all things. In Colossians 1:15-20, for instance, St. Paul dramatically situates God, man, and nature in Christ:

> He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

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We must strongly challenge those polemicists who blame the Judeo-Christian tradition for our environmental problems because it allegedly teaches an idea of "dominion" that excuses unlimited exploitation of our natural habitat. The ideas of stewardship and delegated dominion impose very real limits on what we can do. But those ideas, as important as they are, do not adequately "situate" man environmentally; they fail to convey the full force of our participation in the destiny of all things. One of the problems, I suspect, is that contemporary Christians do not take as seriously as we should our human embodiment and our hope for the resurrection of the body. Although she is not specifically addressing environmental thought, this is an argument pressed by Caroline Walker Bynum in her recent and remarkable study, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity*.

Among both Protestants and Catholics today, there is a growing literature on the theology of the body. The vision proposed, a vision that radically situates humanity in the drama of creation, is addressed by Dominican theologian Benedict Ashley:

> Thus in the physical universe, to the infinite creativity of God corresponds the infinite potentiality of matter. And in that ocean of matter, in the ever shifting and transient forms that cross it, we can see the face of God reflected, in what the medievals called the Mirror of God. Yet that metaphor of the mirror is too Platonic, because God's epiphany in the world is not through mere surface shadows, but is in the coming to be, development, and passing away to make room for novelty of primary natural units, each of which truly exists and acts in its own right and according to its own nature and structure for its time, and interacts with other units in a process of mutual actualization and eventual replacement. The physical universe is not a mere shadow, it is a drama of billions of actors, some minute, blindly moving atoms, some living plants and moving animals, and some intelligent body-persons enacting an evolutionary history whose scenario still remains open to the future.

The avenues of thought explored by Ashley and others are reminiscent of the earlier work of the Jesuit theologian and scientist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Teilhard, of course, was suspected by some of deviating from Christian orthodoxy, and his notion of the "hominization" of the universe has been interpreted—unfairly, I think—as a truly relentless form of anthroprocentrism. His accent, rather, was on the "Christification" of all things along the lines suggested by the passage from Colossians cited above. In any event, it seems to me more than probable that the promptings of environmental thought, combined with intensified interaction between science and theology, might well produce in the coming years an efflorescence of Christian reflection that unfolds as yet undeveloped truths that are latent in cardinal doctrines such as creation, redemption, and the promise of bodily resurrection.

The critical divide in these debates is not between Christian and "secular" accounts of nature. Typically, radical environmental accounts are not really secular but are religious or quasi-religious in character. As with what we usually call religion, they attempt to provide a "meaning system" or an "explanation of everything." It is true that, for some people, environmental philosophies, and even environmental spiritualities, are a replacement for Marxist and other meaning systems that no longer seem plausible. Thus the recoloration of ideologies from "Red" to "Green." But I expect that other forms of "deep ecology" do indeed go deeper than that. They are intuitive and frequently confused probings toward a comprehensive construction of reality. Call it a construction of reality, a narrative, a myth, or whatever—it is a movement of sensibilities and ideas that gropes toward an encompassing account that tries to make sense, not least of all moral sense, of human culture that is neither lost in the cosmos nor at war with it.

These questions are not new to Christian thought, but today they press with renewed urgency. There is a formidable Christian intellectual tradition addressing these questions; it includes, inter alia, figures so estimable as Origen, Irenaeus, Thomas Aquinas, Teilhard, and, in our own day, thinkers such as Wolfhart Pannenberg. In view of this impressive intellectual tradition, it seems odd that so many environmental thinkers (some of whom call themselves eco-philosophers or eco-theologians) seem to think that they are starting from scratch, sniffing about in the ruins of god and goddess myths, piecing together the venerated shards of primitive worldviews, or frankly inventing new world-stories such as sundry versions of the Gaia hypothesis.

On second thought, however, it is not so completely odd that people think they are starting from scratch. We can hardly overestimate the consequences of the fact that most intellectuals today are religiously illiterate, and are most particularly innocent of any knowledge of the Christian intellectual tradition. They may say that modern (or postmodern) thought has "moved beyond" what Aquinas, for instance, had to say about the interaction of nature and history, but in fact they typically have not the foggiest notion of what Aquinas said, or even whether he said anything at all on the subject. I have a fondness for Occam's razor, and one should not look for additional explanations for the foolish things people write when ignorance suffices. Of course there are exceptions, but the excesses of eco-philosophy and eco-theology current today (many of which defy parody) generally represent excite-

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ments untempered by education.

An inquiry into the causes of this widespread illiteracy would require an extended discussion of the state of what we persist in calling higher education. But there are several factors that can be noted briefly. The phrase "Christian intellectual tradition" is thought by many to be oxymoronic since they have been led to believe (frequently with the encouragement of misguided Christians) that Christianity has to do with faith while the intellectual life has to do with reason, and these are two different ways of speaking about reality that cannot speak to one another. In addition, in our current academic ambiance it is widely established as a matter of dogma that "Western culture" is the source of the ills that plague humanity and planet earth. In environmental circles, that dogma is powerfully reinforced by the conventional polemic against the biblical language of domination. Never mind that the Christian intellectual tradition is more than "Western" in the usual use of the term, and never mind that there is nothing more uniquely Western than the pattern of self-criticism that easily turns into self-denigration, it is true that Christianity is undeniably and foundationally entangled with the West, and that is enough, in the minds of many writers, to put it beyond the pale.

Nor, because it is so obvious, should we underestimate a more personal factor. The enthusiasts of deep ecology typically come out of a Christian background. "Come out of" and "background"—the terms are telling. Christianity is something in their past, something they have outgrown; no doubt many would say something that they have escaped. That is the past. Been there. Done that. Ideas must be new; they must be about change, about the future. In the realm of ideas, the myth of linear progress has an unbreakable hold also on the minds of conservationists who understand themselves to be at war with the myth of progress. To seriously entertain the possibility that the Christian tradition may hold some of the answers for which they are looking would be to go backward, even though for most of these writers it would be going back to where they had never been except as children with a Sunday School impression of Christian doctrine.

Moreover, for a certain kind of writer on the left, ideas must bear a revolutionary panache, and there is a frisson of defiance in taking one's stance with, say, the Druids of old (reinvented and sanitized, to be sure, without, for instance, the burning of human sacrifices). This intellectual posture of fancied defiance is tiresomely familiar in our intellectual history. As someone has remarked, everything changes except the avant garde. Even the most eccentric reconstruction of presumably primitive myths can provide the avant garde with a place to stand in opposition to Christianity and Western culture, which are, at the same time, declared to be both thoroughly discredited and powerfully holding humanity in thrall.

And so there are many reasons why Christian wisdom has a hard time gaining a hearing among environmental thinkers who are in search of a religious or quasi-religious construal of reality that can comprehend their concerns. A change in this circumstance will require that, in the years and decades ahead, orthodox Christian thinkers demonstrate that Christianity provides a more plausible and promising account of the legitimate concerns raised by environmentalists. As with thinkers such as Teilhard, such efforts will have to, as they say, press the envelope, and they will sometimes be viewed as theologically suspect. As in any serious intellectual venture, there are risks of taking wrong turns. Such exploration should be undertaken within a community and tradition that provide necessary correctives by reference to the rule of faith (*regula fidei*) and teaching authority (*magisterium*).

The exploration must be undertaken, however. I have already mentioned some of the Christian thinkers who are engaging these questions, but much more needs to be done. It is too easy for orthodox Christians to parody and dismiss the more sensationalist popularizers of "creation theology" such as Rosemary Ruether, Matthew Fox, and Thomas Berry. The sometimes bizarre manner of their expression should not blind us to the legitimate concerns being raised. The fact is that Western Christianity, especially in the post-Reformation period, has been preoccupied with the question of individual salvation. That is, of course, a question of surpassing urgency for each of us. But the preoccupation with that question has contributed to a failure to do justice to the cosmic dimensions of the Christian message. Too many philosophers and religious thinkers, including serious Christians, have thought it necessary to look outside the Christian tradition for a way of understanding the nature and destiny of the universe, when a more convincing account can be developed from within the tradition. Such a development will require a fuller engagement with Eastern Orthodox theology, and with the rich and oft-neglected resources of the early Christian centuries as these are available to us in the patristic literature.

It is observed that every heresy is a truth that has lost its balance, and at present, as well as in the past, flirtation with heresy and heresy itself have attended much thinking about the relationship between God and his creation. There is, for example, the perennial temptation to pantheism. In the same breath that orthodox writers condemn pantheism, they frequently condemn panentheism as well. I would suggest that some distinctions are in order here. Pantheism is clearly incompatible with the Great Tradition of Christian thought. Pantheism is

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the claim that God is all there is or that all is God. It is a radical immanentism that denies the transcendence of God. Although there is some dispute about his teaching, it would seem that Spinoza, for example, equated God with the systematic perfection of the world order. In pantheism, God engulfs all, which theoretically results in negating what is not God. The practical result, somewhat paradoxically, is the negation of God as an unnecessary hypothesis. When all is God, there is no need for God.

Panentheism is crucially different. *Pan-en-theos* literally means everything in God. The coining of the term is usually attributed to the German philosopher Karl C. F. Krause (1781-1832), who wanted to articulate more clearly the position of Kant. In that idealistic tradition, but giving it a more mystical turn, Krause posited God as the primordial being who contains the universe but is apart from it and superior to it, with human consciousness being a participation in the mind of God toward which nature is evolving. Quite apart from Krause's enterprise, one finds elements of panentheism in Plato's being and becoming, in Nicholas of Cusa's Infinite that reconciles all opposites, in the Absolute Spirit of Hegel, in Whitehead's process theology, and in Teilhard's understanding of creation evolving toward the Omega Point. Hans Urs von Balthasar has insightfully traced the ways in which the identification of God, creation, and human consciousness strongly shaped both the theistic and atheistic streams of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Romanticism. The second volume of Wolfhart Pannenberg's *Systematic Theology* is a particularly rich resource for understanding contemporary scientific and religious explorations into the meanings of *pan-en-theos*.

Just the mention of some of the schools of thought associated with it makes clear that panentheism has, to put it gently, a checkered history. And it may be that the term itself has suffered so much abuse that it is no longer usable. Nonetheless, the lines of inquiry connected with the term—combined with fresh study of biblical, patristic, and Orthodox thought—hold high promise, I believe, for a constructive response to the concerns raised by today's environmental philosophers. I am persuaded that the truth in some of the arguments that eco-philosophers and eco-theologians wrongly direct against the Christian tradition can be better grounded from within the tradition.

At a conference some years ago, a noted Calvinist theologian declared, "Whatever else needs to be said about the transcendence of God, we can agree that God minus the universe is still and fully God." I am not sure that I would want to flatly disagree with that formulation, but I think it is at least potentially misleading. Such an abstraction may be, to paraphrase Pascal, the God of the philosophers, but it is very doubtfully the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and God incarnate in Jesus Christ. The creation has, in the humanity of Jesus the Christ, been incorporated into the very Godhead—into, if one wishes to put it that way, the very being of God.

Citing, and affirming, the wisdom of the Athenians, St. Paul declares, "In Him we live and move and have our being." (Acts 7:28) And what is true of us human beings is true of all that is; the macrocosmic and microcosmic, the galaxies beyond numbering and the subatomic particles beyond discernment. In creation and redemption, God's covenantal faithfulness holds all that is, was, and ever will be to himself. In the dynamic of creation, even the millions of species that have disappeared are not finally lost. This, I believe, is the sensibility that is consonant with Jesus' words about every hair being counted and every fallen sparrow taken into Divine account. It is in this context, a context decisively shaped by God's redemptive purposes in Christ, that we can join with St. Francis of Assisi in hymns of familial and filial piety toward nature. St. Francis is, of course, a great favorite of environmentalists, but, divorced from God in Christ, such piety toward the creation becomes a form of idolatry.

The great danger is an *identification* of God and humanity, or of God and creation. God always remains other, the Ultimate Other, infinitely more than we can think or say. All our thought and language about God is analogical, and we must ever keep in mind the caution of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) that "No similarity can be found so great but that the dissimilarity is even greater." In sharp contrast to some religious proponents of "deep ecology" who betray a monistic passion to subsume all of reality into a conceptual tapioca pudding of undifferentiated Oneness, we know that neither we nor nature is God. As our inquiries proceed analogically, they are both enriched and disciplined by an awareness of what Eastern Orthodoxy calls the "apophatic" and in Western thought is known as the *via negativa*. God is not this and God is not that, and yet this and that are not without God. All of reality is theonomous, and we do not really know the most important truth about anything, whether macrocosmic or microcosmic, until we know it, so to speak, in God.

Much environmental writing is marked by a treacly sentimentality about nature, often combined, oddly enough, with a venomous contempt for the part of nature that is humanity. Such sentimentality finds expression also in patterns of Christian piety. For instance, the popular nineteenth-century hymn, "From Greenland's Icy Mountains": "What though the spicy breezes, Blow soft o'er Ceylon's isle; Though every prospect pleases, And only man is vile." The late Ernest Becker offers a bracing antidote to such nature sentimentality:

> At its most elemental level the human organism, like crawling life, has a mouth, digestive

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> tract, and anus, a skin to keep it intact, and appendages with which to acquire food. Existence, for all organismic life, is a constant struggle to feed—a struggle to incorporate whatever other organisms they can fit into their mouths and press down their gullets without choking. Seen in these stark terms, life on this planet is a gory spectacle, a science-fiction nightmare in which digestive tracts fitted with teeth at one end are tearing away at whatever flesh they can reach, and at the other end are piling up the fuming waste excrement as they move along in search of more flesh.

Such realism gives added force to our reading of St. Paul's reflection on a creation that is not yet what it will be: "We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." (Romans 8:22,23) The bloody horror of nature's ways, the destruction and tragedy, the manifest injustices and problems of theodicy—all these must be given full scope in any adequate Christian reflection on the world reality in which we are situated. Put differently, such a reflection must take full account of the cross in both its human and cosmic significance. As the previously cited first chapter of Colossians suggests, the peace for which we hope is through the blood of the cross.

The goal is a fuller understanding of nature, which entails a fuller understanding of the *humanum*. Those who rail against humanism are inevitability embroiled in a task that is humanistic and even, if I may use the term, anthropocentric. They can only persuade, convince, cajole, reproach, and hope to change the minds and actions of human beings. There are no other moral agents in the universe. Those who reach to include, for example, simian cousins in the community of moral agency only underscore the unavoidably normative status of humanity. The late Abraham Joshua Heschel was fond of saying that man is the cantor and caretaker of the universe. We will take care only to the extent that, as cantor, we sing the songs that bestow meaning upon the universe and our place in it.

And so what songs should we sing in order that we might take better care? First, the song of God's sovereignty, and of our dignity derived from his caring for us. Second, the song of God's delight in His creation, of which the Bible gives many examples, and of our being invited to delight in His delight. Third, the song of reason's gift by which we understand the uses of nature to preserve and enhance the well-being of humanity—humanity being the part of creation that God became in order that we might become fully God's. Fourth, the song of Francis, the song of fellow-feeling with all that is, and most especially with the animals of which we are forever one. Fifth, the song of wonder at a beauty that is always "other," and that, for all its brutality, bespeaks the "fearful symmetry" of Blake's abiding vision. Sixth, the song of obedience to the command to care, of faithfulness to the dominion that is delegated to us and that none other can assume. Seventh and finally, the song of redemptive hope, of the resurrection of the body; of our bodies that encompass the stuff of the creation of which we are part; of our bodies that participate in the body of Christ that is the Church, and therefore anticipate, already now, that perfect communion with God for which the whole creation waits with eager longing.

Along these lines, here only briefly sketched, we may better apprehend a creationally situated humanity, and develop an environmental theology and piety that is coherent, comprehensive, compelling, and true to the revelation of God in Christ. FT

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Law and the Christian Story

William J. Stuntz

Conservative Christians have in recent years devoted a good deal of energy and attention to criticizing lawyers and courts. Though some of the criticism seems overheated to me, a lot of it is richly deserved, and I have engaged in my share. But as we criticize, even rightly, I fear we miss something. If this is indeed our Father's world, we should expect to see signs or hints of His ownership everywhere—small suggestions in surprising places that the Christian story is really *true*. These signs, when we see them, come as a delight and refreshment to believers, for the Christian story is, above all, very good news. And they present real opportunities to open the eyes of unbelievers, to give them a glimpse of the reality they have heretofore denied. All of which suggests that we should at all times have our own eyes open, that we should watch and listen for the signs.

Our often-justified attacks on the law and the courts may blind us to the fact that there are some delightful hints buried in the law itself—not in grand disputes about the scope of constitutional rights (the sort of thing Christians are most apt to worry about these days), but in some of the most mundane matters the law deals with, in bankruptcy law and the tax code and the law of domestic relations. My goal here is to mention two such hints, phenomena that the legal system perpetually struggles with, and in its struggling suggests how powerful is the Christian account of who we are and what God has done for us. Both phenomena are longstanding; in law as elsewhere there really is nothing new under the sun.

The first example concerns amnesty—the cancelling of a conceded legal obligation, not because of any special virtue of the obligor, but because . . . well, therein lies a story.

WILLIAM J. STUNTZ *is Class of 1962 Professor and Horace W. Goldsmith Research Professor at the University of Virginia Law School.*

The most obvious form of legal amnesty is bankruptcy, at the heart of which lies a simple behavioral phenomenon with an interesting twist. The simple phenomenon is this: A debtor who is already in over his head will not pay, whether or not there is a legal mechanism for discharging his debts. There is a kind of Laffer curve of debt: A little bit tends to be repaid; a lot tends to be ignored. (Hence the old saying that if you borrow a little money from a bank, the bank owns you, but if you borrow a lot of money, you own the bank.) This simple phenomenon has a simple explanation: If all or almost all my future income is going to go to my creditors because I am drastically overextended, I have no incentive to work. I'll starve if I work (because my creditors will take everything) and I'll starve if I don't—but at least then I'll starve without having to work. By demanding everything, my creditors will get nothing, because I am in a hole too deep to dig out of.

Actually, I won't starve, for if my creditors can demand everything, I won't wait around for them to do so. I will run and hide; I will avoid confronting my overextension because confronting it would lead to unpleasant consequences. My incentive, in other words, is to respond to my improvidence by adding flight or cheating to it. This, in a nutshell, is the genesis of bankruptcy, and of a variety of other amnesty-like devices in the legal system; statutes of limitation are another familiar example.

Because we are accustomed to legal regimes of this sort, we tend not to notice how odd they are. Bankruptcy laws and statutes of limitation cancel obligations that are rightfully owed. One might think that when a rightful obligation is cancelled, the one who owes it must have done something specially deserving—the cancellation must be a reward of some sort, as when a prisoner serving a life sentence engages in some extraordinary act of heroism or selflessness inside the prison walls and is subsequently freed. Yet what does the bankrupt debtor do to deserve this can-

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celling of his debt? The answer is bizarre: He gets into a *lot* of debt. A little bit of debt isn't cancelled; the debtor must pay up. A lot of debt, on the other hand, can be wiped out by the bankruptcy judge's order. Mild financial misjudgment yields a tightened belt. Severe improvidence yields *forgiveness.*

The temptation is to say, it can yield nothing else—the debtor who is in way over his head can't and won't pay, so "forgiving" the debt is really just an acknowledgment of reality. But that ignores another option, one the law embraced not so very long ago. In the early years of our nation, debtors who would not or could not pay were imprisoned—a very common rule in many legal regimes going back to ancient times. Recall Jesus' story in Matthew 5: "You shall not come out of there until you have paid the last cent." Imprisonment for debt is really quite logical: When ordinary civil remedies no longer work, the system should, one might think, resort to more serious punishment. And the truly improvident debtor has often borrowed money he should have known would be beyond his ability to repay. This is akin to theft, and in modern legal systems theft leads to imprisonment. This points up the real choice the law faces when a debtor is in over his head. The law can of course wipe out the debt, as it does. But it can do something else instead: *it can wipe out the debtor.*

This picture captures something of our condition and God's options. Adam's rebellion in the Garden cannot be made right, at least not by him, and its consequences, which begin to dawn on Adam when God calls out to him, are more severe than he wishes to contemplate. So Adam responds not by confronting his sin, but by hiding—first literally, and then, when concealing himself appears not to be working, by trying to deceive and shift the blame: "The woman you sent me . . ."

It's easy enough to see the analogy: Before the Father we are all quite literally bankrupts, with debts far higher than we can pay, without the courage to confront the consequences save in response to the Father's undeserved and complete mercy. We need *redemption*—a financial term, not just a theological one—that is, we need to have our creditors bought off. But the Father is himself the sole creditor, and (though we might wish to convince ourselves otherwise) His options are not determined by our needs. He has two choices, not just one. And to understand the nature of His mercy, we need to understand the nature of the other choice—a point we are quick to forget, as we prefer to think that we are like the heroic prisoner receiving a well-earned reward rather than the stupidly improvident debtor. Wiping out the debt is not the only possibility. Wiping out the debtor would, indeed, make more sense. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a bankrupt fool like me.

But the analogy goes further, and here lies the twist. Bankruptcy law worries a great deal about another problem than simple inability to pay when the debt tally runs too high. When debtors are in over their heads but not yet hauled into bankruptcy court, they have a tendency to gamble—to take overlarge risks with the resources they have left in an effort to lift themselves out of their deepening hole. The picture is familiar: The bettor in a losing streak tends to wager ever more in a desperate effort to retrieve his losses. Of course, the strategy does not work well. Once in a while the gambler wins big, but more often he succeeds only in piling up losses. Risks have this unpleasant tendency: they materialize. The hole in which the debtor/gambler finds himself only grows bigger through his efforts to climb out of it.

So the irony is even more severe than we thought. Not only does culpable improvidence not breed greater financial responsibility; it breeds yet more culpable improvidence. There is an illusion to heavy debt: the belief that the very sort of behavior that got us into this mess (excessive risk-taking and overconfidence) will, in greater doses, get us out. Foolishness, in this setting, is self-reinforcing.

This captures something about sin, and about us. Most of the time, we think of our sin (when we think of it at all) as static—one more notch in the minus column here, holding the line over there, perhaps a small gain somewhere else. The key to this picture is the unrelatedness of these losses and gains, the absence of any sense that one mistake tends to generate others. A better picture is the crumbling of a dam as a small leak grows into a torrent that obliterates the dam and wipes out everything in its path. Sin is not the drip of an almost-turned-off faucet; it is the process by which the drip becomes a waterfall. It reproduces itself so that wherever we find some, more is sure to follow; the flood is coming, and the river banks will not contain it. Meanwhile, our efforts to recapture lost ground have a natural tendency to lose *more* ground, because those efforts stem from the very thing that lost the ground in the first place—our belief in our own capability, our confidence that given our obvious cleverness, we will surely pick the right number on the roulette wheel this time, and then everything will be all right. The fact that this confidence has done us only harm escapes us, because we are, most of us, a combination common to the worst bankrupts: cocky and a bit stupid.

And yet, thanks be to God, the debts can still be wiped clean. Bankruptcy relieves even the very foolish debtor who, once insolvent, continues to pile bad debt on bad debt—and if ever a debtor deserves punishment, it is he who, realizing his desperate straits, proceeds to make those straits even more desperate. So too does God forgive even me. The debtor is not wiped out—though that is a thoroughly plausible, indeed the most natural, option. Only the debt is.

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The second example of a legal mirror on the Christian story is not isolated in any particular area of law, though one might call it the "tax code problem." Consider the following question: Where, traffic violations aside, do we see the largest volume of lawbreaking by ordinary people? The answer is surely taxes—think of the near-universal fear of an IRS audit which, in theory anyway, should hold no terror for those who obey the rules. Now consider another question: In what sphere of life does the law regulate with the greatest detail—where do legal rules most proliferate? The answer again is tax, where rules have bred more rules until the system is about to collapse under its own weight.

In one sense, this pair of answers seems odd. Law is, to a large extent, about getting people to behave themselves. A natural supposition, then, would go something like this: the more law, the better the behavior.

Yet it doesn't work that way. When the IRS issues a new revenue ruling, taxpayers and their attorneys immediately begin to seek out ways to evade the ruling, ways to do the thing the ruling prohibits but in a form the ruling does not capture. It is a little like the behavior of a child who, when told to stop throwing his ball in the house, starts to throw a hockey puck instead. (And, as every parent knows, when caught, the child immediately says, "But you said no throwing *balls* in the house.") One can always solve the problem, temporarily, by punishing the child. But the problem recurs, constantly, both with children (at least mine) and with taxpayers, for both groups are eager to wring every last ounce of flexibility from the rules—to do all they can get away with. Parents' solution is to train children to seek a different goal, about which more in a moment. The tax code's solution is to make more rules, to forbid each new clever evasion as it comes up.

In this arms race between taxpayers eager to hold onto as much as they can and tax law eager to stop them, one should bet on the taxpayers—for the same reason the parent cannot win the hockey puck argument, and must therefore seek to change the child's agenda. Like disobedient children, taxpayers have a great deal of ingenuity, a natural bent for coming up with new and not-yet-forbidden ways of doing the sort of thing the rules seem to be trying to forbid. They also have a taste for doing just that. These talents and inclinations predictably outrun the rulemakers' ability to define prohibited behavior with precision. The legal system is, to some degree, helpless.

I am, of course, exaggerating. After all, the IRS does manage to collect a lot of taxes. But this picture captures an essential truth about the legal system, one that cuts across a great many areas of law—consider the current flaps about campaign finance and the 1996 campaign. The best-thought-out legal rules can't seem to get regulated actors to behave the way the law wants them to behave. Rules prohibit, and the rules' targets maneuver around the prohibition; the rules prohibit more, and the targets maneuver more. Law may not be generating the misbehavior, but it is surprisingly bad at putting a stop to it.

Now ask another pair of questions. Where in ordinary life do we see the largest quantity of the opposite sort of behavior—genuine altruism, behavior that is thoroughly other-regarding? The obvious answer is the family. Sinful as we are, we still manage with some frequency to sacrifice our own welfare for that of our children; spouses (perhaps less frequently) sacrifice for each other; even siblings occasionally (to their parents' delight and amazement) sacrifice for each other. There is plenty of selfishness and exploitation in families, but then there is plenty of selfishness and exploitation everywhere in life. What separates family life from most of the rest of life is how much unself-conscious unself-interested conduct one sees.

Yet what sphere of ordinary life is *least* subject to legal regulation? The answer is, once again, families. The law does indeed place limits on how husbands and wives and parents and children interact, but the limits are few, and focus primarily on truly extreme misbehavior. Family law is in this sense the mirror image of tax law: Where taxpayers consult the rules constantly, family members live out their lives ignorant of their legal obligations to one another. Yet where taxpayers invest a great deal of energy in trying to maximize their "take," to evade the rules, family members, at least sometimes, actively seek to promote the interests of other family members without giving a thought to the law's requirements.

This is a puzzle. If all the IRS's rules can't produce even the avoidance of exploitation (the IRS, needless to say, doesn't try for altruism), how can family law's light regulatory hand coexist with so much genuine unselfishness—with so much behavior that is not just compliant or nonexploitive, but actually *loving*? The answer must be that the law has nothing to do with the loving behavior, for it seems most concentrated in the area the law least touches. Where, then, does it come from?

The answer seems clear: Something in our makeup disposes us to a passionate loyalty to kin, and this loyalty pushes us toward treating the interests of family members as, in a real sense, our own. Sociobiologists—a trendy group in universities these days—identify this tendency with the desire to propagate one's genes; others locate it in the bond infants experience with parents. There is a surfeit of competing explanations, but general agreement on the phenomenon to be explained. On those occasions when I am a good husband or father, I behave as I do because I see my wife's and my children's interests as my own—I identify with their welfare. And this is how we train our children, this is how parents avoid

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the never-ending argument about the definition of rules: We teach them that they must see themselves not as taxpayers trying to hold onto every last penny, but as part of a *family*, advancing its welfare, not just their own.

The success of this move lies in part in its acknowledgment of who and what we are. Selfishness is not denied; rather, it is turned to virtue, by the simple expedient of altering the meaning of "self." And the alteration works, for whatever its source, there plainly is something inside us that predisposes us to so identify our interests with the interests of our closest kin.

All this offers a nice echo of the Christian account of salvation. We are prone to selfishness and exploitation, as anyone with eyes can see. We are also prone to something else, something less obvious (save to lawyers, who are more prone than anyone else): We think the solution to selfishness and exploitation lies in good rules. Robert Frost famously wrote that good fences make good neighbors, and the line captures a widespread intuition. Fences—boundaries, rules—can turn us from the rapacious creatures we are, unfenced, into the kind of people one would want to live next door to. Good rules, Frost might have said, make good people.

But of course they don't. Rather, they highlight what bad people we are. There is even a sense in which the rules bring the badness to the surface, as the behavior of all those strategic taxpayers attests.

So law, even very good law, cannot cure us; we will continue to rack up huge debts, and must either be punished or forgiven. Forgiveness, though, isn't enough; wiping away yesterday's debt only leaves me free to borrow more tomorrow. The propensity must be changed. And how is the change to happen? By changing our family attachment. The essence of living a good life is not adherence to a good set of rules, but identification of our interests with the interest of the one who truly is good, the one who defines what goodness is—with the Father—by becoming a member of *His* family. Forgiveness, amazing as it is, isn't the most amazing part of the Christian story. The truly astonishing point is that through Christ I can become not a redeemed slave—not simply a bankrupt whose debts are discharged—but a son, a member in good standing of the household empowered to advance the household's welfare.

This adoption is not quite like the adoptions people engage in; it is not just a matter of labels and emotional attachments. God doesn't simply call me His son and hope I'll start acting like it. He actually changes my descent (perhaps the sociobiologists are right about how much descent matters); my blood line shifts from the first to the second Adam. I am not told to behave *as if* I had been born into the family; as Nicodemus learned, I *am* born into the family.

This divine adoption, this second birth, is not primarily about getting us to behave ourselves. But it is, in truth, the only way to get us to behave ourselves. We live in a culture that exalts Frost's fences: One of the reasons our law is too much with us is that we see it as the road to a kind of earthly salvation. Perhaps it is no coincidence that we also live in a culture beset by family decline. Our attachment to our many rules and rights may dull our sense of attachment to kin. The law itself tells us, if we have ears to hear, that we are wrong on both counts. Law teaches many things, but the most important thing it teaches is its limits, what it cannot do. Reining in the most egregious sorts of misbehavior is feasible, but producing *good* behavior is far beyond its capacity. For that, as for so very much else, we need not better fences, but a better family. FT

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Memoirs of a Catholic Boyhood

A. J. Bacevich

The muddy Illinois River ranks among the least distinguished of the Mississippi's tributaries, a brown expanse of water sliding past slippery banks strewn with refuse. From time to time, after heavy rains, the river jumps its traces. But such floods disrupt only momentarily the rhythm of life along its banks. Eventually the rain stops, the water subsides, and the old routines resume.

Neither grand nor beautiful, the Illinois' chief character is mere serviceability. And that is likewise the character of the towns that lie near it. Their names are not without charm: Ottawa, Chillicothe, Seneca, and Marseilles ("Mar-sails" in local argot). But these prim villages remain largely unknown, hidden in the vast rural heartland, a region long settled yet all but lost in a nation defined by its great cities and its sprawling, distended suburbs. To travelers passing through from the East Coast or even from Chicago, these small towns are not even subjects for nostalgia. Like the odd surviving dime store or drive-in movie, they are artifacts, bound for oblivion and not likely to be missed.

That the Illinois Valley would offer an auspicious setting for a monastery school for boys no longer appears obvious. But in the late 1800s, this was boom country. Opportunity—to farm, to work the railroads out of Chicago, to mine coal, or to snare a job in one of the small factories sprouting along the river—drew a steady stream of immigrants into the valley. First the Irish and Germans, then the Poles and Italians, came in waves, their arrival not only swelling the population along the Illinois but giving the valley a pronounced Catholic character.

That the sons of these newcomers should receive a distinctively Catholic education went without saying—at least so concluded John Lancaster Spalding, the energetic first bishop of Peoria, installed in 1877. Spalding's master plan for his newly created diocese envisioned a full-scale network of Catholic institutions—not just in prosperous Peoria but upriver as well. To found such institutions, however, Spalding needed to recruit the religious staff to run them—no small task when it came to the backwater towns along the banks of the Illinois.

But Spalding had luck as well as energy: the Benedictines of St. Vincent's Archabbey in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, were then embarking upon an ambitious campaign of missionary monasticism, seeking to extend the order's presence throughout mid-America. In 1890, the abbot of St. Vincent's accepted Spalding's challenge and dispatched a tiny contingent of monks to the Illinois Valley to create a new monastic community and to found a school.

The end of the nineteenth century was a time of rapid growth for the Church and Catholic education in the United States, and Spalding's enthusiasm for institution-building was hardly unique. In dioceses across the nation, brick-and-mortar prelates pursued similar programs, giving rise to the empire of churches and schools, seminaries and convents, hospitals and retreat houses that would constitute the tangible patrimony of the American Catholic Church in this century.

The new Benedictine endeavor along the Illinois, however, was in some ways atypical. At a time when the character of the American Church was decidedly urban and working class, the transplants from St. Vincent's set about establishing their community virtually on the prairie. And at a time when the Church was almost stridently ethnic, they determined to transcend chauvinism: In naming their enterprise, they passed over the patrons identified with locally prominent ethnic groups to select the great Benedictine scholar of early England, the Venerable Bede.

On September 7, 1891, the new school opened, a faculty of six welcoming fifty students. Bishop Spald-

A. J. Bacevich *is Executive Director of the Foreign Policy Institute at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, D.C.*

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ing had envisioned a full-fledged college. What he got was a high school, situated on a spacious tract along the river's northern bank (on land once belonging to Daniel Webster and known locally as "Webster Farm"), catering to a mix of boarders and day students, the sons of farmers or local businessmen. The result was a far cry from Groton or Choate. But the men of St. Bede did not aspire to create a fancy prep school decked out in papist regalia. Nor did they presume to vie with the likes of Notre Dame or Georgetown, hungry to achieve acceptance in the secular precincts of American higher education. For St. Bede, the very notion of such ambition was absurd. Yet far from breeding a sense of complacency or provincialism, diffidence fostered a clarity of purpose. From the outset, this was one place that knew what it was about. The school took root.

By the time I enrolled in 1961 as a fourteen year-old "minim," St. Bede was in its seventieth year. Years earlier, it had become our "family school." In attending I was following in my father's footsteps—almost, it seemed, in a literal sense. For in the twenty-five year interval between his matriculation and my own, the spartan campus had hardly changed. The strands of continuity extended well beyond the iron bedsteads, battered steel lockers, and scarred wooden desks. The program of studies and the daily regimen to which my fellow boarders and I were introduced had served my father's generation well enough and—despite the cataclysms of the 1940s and 1950s—would presumably serve my generation just as well.

Parents, students, and faculty all took this for granted, indeed, found it reassuring: continuity signified strength and steadfastness. Within this small enclave, self-contained and even somewhat aloof on its bluff overlooking the river and beyond the outskirts of town, past and present formed a seamless whole. We expected things to stay that way.

Those expectations proved to be illusory. Even then, outside the Illinois Valley, floodwaters were gathering. St. Bede was about to be engulfed, and when the waters receded, they revealed a school and a Church utterly transformed. The changes were irrevocable. They were also profoundly disorienting.

At the beginning of the 1960s, Americans in large numbers teased themselves with the notion that the United States was about to enter a new and exciting era. The moment had arrived for the nation to shake loose from the uptight, button-down, gray flannel spirit of the immediate postwar years. And for evidence that Big Change was indeed beckoning, one needed to look no further than the national political scene where avuncular old Ike—epitomizing the flaccid politics of the 1950s—was giving way to the glamorous and dynamic John F. Kennedy.

The symbolism of JFK's storied inauguration of January 20, 1961 extended well beyond the generational passing of authority from five-star general to lieutenant, junior grade. "The Sixties" had arrived, a time when style and substance became interchangeable. Embodying the new age was the aura surrounding Kennedy himself and his bright young men: the alluring mixture of elegance and energy; the witty and self-deprecating personal manner; the huge stores of self-confidence; the jut-jawed idealism stripped bare (so we were informed) of all illusion; the eagerness to grapple with the great and dangerous challenges of the day. "Our problems are critical," Kennedy announced in his first State of the Union Address barely a week after his inauguration. "The tide is unfavorable. The news will be worse before it is better." Thus taken into the handsome young President's confidence, Americans found such grim prospects to be at once invigorating and titillating. Perilous seas lay dead ahead and our green-as-grass helmsman unflinchingly set course for the storm's very center. We thrilled at the prospect.

To top it off, the Kennedys were conspicuously, even ostentatiously, Catholic. To the President's coreligionists, this was a hugely important fact, further reinforcing impressions that events in general were taking a positive turn: Kennedy's ascent to the presidency—and his clan's investiture as America's Royal Family—seemed to eradicate the last vestiges of American anti-Catholicism. When Jack and Jackie moved triumphantly into the White House, American Catholics at last laid claim to full citizenship.

So things appeared even in the most obscure corners of the American Church. When I arrived at St. Bede, the spirit of the New Frontier pervaded the campus. A resplendent portrait of the President and First Lady hung in the school office. The schoolboy-editors of *Via Baeda* acclaimed the onset of the "Soaring Sixties," a decade that they proclaimed uniquely rich in promise. If fulfilling that promise required that the stodgy, the timid, and the cautious would be discomfited, so be it. There was abroad in the land an eagerness to reinvigorate flagging causes (above all, the fight against communism), to right old wrongs (starting with racial inequality), to drag dated institutions into the modern world (not excluding the Church), and to affirm the righteousness of American power (rendered by *Via Baeda* as ICBMs, B-52 bombers, nuclear submarines, and Mercury space capsules).

That imposing photos of the latest in rocketry and military hardware—provided courtesy of the federal government—should grace a high school annual seemed altogether fitting. Technology was the lubricant that greased the wheels of progress. Unlike other sources of wealth or power that were finite, technology—in the classroom, we tended still to refer to it as "science"—was boundless. Better still, in the advances that technology promised to the Soaring Sixties there would be no losers. There would be nothing lost.

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News penetrating our enclave told of momentous events unfolding in Washington and elsewhere. Throughout our four years, the clamor for civil rights grew ever more insistent and was the single story most consistently dominating the headlines. But there was much more. In our freshman year, John Glenn orbited Earth in Friendship 7 and the President seized the moment to commit the United States to putting a man on the moon by decade's end. When we were sophomores, the world survived the Cuban Missile Crisis, a tale of hubris, miscalculation, and barely averted catastrophe recast as an epic starring the valiant young Roland and his stalwart lieutenants. In our junior year, Kennedy was assassinated, achieving in an instant a status beyond history. By the time we received our diplomas, the American air offensive against North Vietnam had begun and the first U.S. combat troops were deploying to South Vietnam, determined to make good the martyred President's vow to "pay any price, bear any burden . . . to assure the survival and the success of liberty."

Even as self-absorbed teenagers, we sensed that these developments were historic. Yet however much we yearned to have a hand in some great undertaking, amidst our cornfields we remained mere spectators, consumers of news bulletins from Cape Canaveral or Birmingham or Dallas, eager readers of *Time* magazine's latest upbeat dispatch out of Saigon. Traipsing from dorm to chapel to refectory to classroom under the watchful eye of the men who served as our prefects and teachers, we could not possibly imagine that the old order was about to be swept away, with St. Bede itself an ancillary casualty.

Even today, with the utility of the sixties as political metaphor firmly established, the decade remains contested terrain. Some persist in seeing it as a period of bold experimentation and high ideals, a grand progressive assault on the forces of oppression and reaction, a popular uprising of the young, the marginalized, and the dispossessed bound together by their common commitment to liberation. For others the 1960s signify disaster, the moment when America went off the rails, plunging into an abyss of political, fiscal, and moral profligacy from which it has not yet managed to extricate itself.

Neither interpretation is empirically sustainable. A balanced appraisal of the sixties will probably remain beyond reach until the Baby Boomers who defined its sensibility finally pass from the scene. For the moment, the most that lies within our power is to document in an evenhanded and truthful way the world that the sixties swept aside. For a conservative undertaking such an enterprise, America's present-day pathologies and debased culture offer tempting points of departure. But to work back from the present is to make a great mistake, one guaranteed to degenerate into faultfinding while reviving controversies that today possess all the relevance of love beads. Better to begin such an appraisal simply by remembering the small and seemingly insignificant places that great events swept aside. St. Bede Academy was one such place.

I do not mean to portray the Old School in golden hues. St. Bede did not lack for shortcomings. In some respects, it fell short even of its own modest aspirations. Viewed from afar, the St. Bede campus can easily be mistaken for a minimum security correctional facility. A silvery water tower—standard-issue to even the most unassuming settlement throughout the Midwest—dominates a cluster of brick buildings. Only after one leaves the highway to drive up the long, tree-lined access road—"the Lane"—does the institution's academic purpose and religious identity become apparent. The Lane ends in a tear shaped turnaround at the school's entrance. Centered in that teardrop is a small circular fishpond, and centered in the fishpond stands a small statue of Mary. In those days, peacocks strutted on the lawn and among the trees, their whimsical presence part of the surroundings as long as anyone could remember.

A commitment to function over form apparently inspired the deservedly forgotten architects who over a period of decades designed the school's buildings. That the result may still please the eye is a tribute to the capacity of otherwise undistinguished old structures to transform themselves as they settle comfortably into their surroundings.

At St. Bede, the main building, housing classrooms, study halls, chapel, and dorms, is plain, purposeful, and solid, its no-nonsense exterior redeemed upon entry by tall ceilings and windows and cool, dark corridors hung with photographs of past graduating classes. Extending directly behind the school is the refectory and above it the library, this wing also connecting to the silent precincts of the abbey proper. Adjacent to the school is the gymnasium, a monstrosity of stone, metal, and glass designed in the boxy style of the 1950s and within a decade of completion already acquiring a slatternly look. Directly behind the gym are playing fields: courts, diamond, and gridiron surrounded by a cinder track. Near the athletic fields and in the shadow of the water tower squats a large barn, home in the early 1960s to several dozen milk cows.

As a place to live, week-in and week-out, such surroundings left much to be desired. The entire operation was strictly no-frills. In my time, student sleeping quarters were long open dorms, musky with the smell of young bodies, wet towels, and dirty laundry. This absence of privacy defined every aspect of our existence outside of the confessional. We dressed together, showered together, attended Mass together, and dined together on meals that achieved a spectacular standard of unpalatability.

The daily routine was fixed and distractions few. Weekdays began with mandatory chapel and ended

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with mandatory study hall. The time for lights-out did not vary. Campus amenities consisted of little more than vending machines and battered pool tables. Even on weekends—apart from brief afternoon excursions when we prowled nearby towns for unattached girls—we were confined to campus. Violation of this rule meant immediate expulsion. On rare occasions, we ventured under strict monkish supervision to some local parish hall for a sock hop, encountering the same girls we had pursued earlier that day (raising questions as to who was pursuing whom).

Given such restrictions, diversions tended to be of the roll-your-own variety: for the hard cases, sneaking cigarettes and trading off-color stories in the lavatory; for the self-consciously sensitive, long walks down the Lane with longer conversations that invariably concerned parents or girls; for the high-testosterone crowd, sweaty, exhausting evenings in the gym playing full-court, shirts-on-skins, call-your-own-fouls basketball. We forged lasting friendships. Yet as teenage boys throbbing with adolescent anxieties and bewildered by our yearning to achieve manhood, we behaved at times toward one another with a casual viciousness and petty brutality that one can only recall with shame.

We knew that St. Bede was a religious community as well as a school, but we attributed little consequence to that fact. We were seldom out of the sight of priests, but we were singularly incurious about who they were. From time to time—when attending a requiem mass for a deceased member of the community, for example—the curtain would part and we saw something of the inner life of the abbey. But for the most part we paid little conscious attention to the life of the men in whose care we had been placed. Nor did we wish for more: for the most part, we took it for granted that the abbey existed to serve us—when the reverse was no less the truth.

By 1990s standards, the monastic community I knew would fail to qualify for sympathetic interest. For starters, the abbey would flunk present-day diversity requirements. Not only, of course, all male and all Catholic, it was also (with a single exception) all white. Further, although the priests and brothers of St. Bede lived a meager existence, they were poor not because they were oppressed but because they chose to be. And with each member of the community having taken a vow of celibacy, individual sexual orientation was not a matter of huge political significance.

Yet the monks made for a rich collection of characters and personalities. They ranged from the very old to the very young, with several of our teachers still in their twenties—astonishing to recall at a time when it has become increasingly rare to find an American Catholic priest not approaching eligibility for social security. Some were gentle and tolerant; others irritable, impatient, and ill-tempered. We had teachers and prefects who were erudite and sophisticated, accomplished men of letters who expended entire careers patiently tutoring unreceptive teenagers in first-year Latin or initiating them into the splendors of natural law. We had a few others who could be crude and loutish, bumpkins who invited teenage ridicule. In manner, a handful were effeminate, in one or two instances excruciatingly so; but the rest—the great majority—were vigorously and self-evidently masculine. In retrospect—though as boys we were oblivious to the fact—it is clear that some among their number were wrestling with the same fearsome demons that we would ourselves come to know soon enough.

In short, they were flawed, quirky, and utterly human—polar opposites of the exalted clerics we had beheld from an appropriately respectful distance in our parishes at home. Indeed, living at close quarters with the monks of St. Bede Abbey overturned our understanding of what it meant to be "religious." These men were not obviously pious or saintly. They were, it seemed, merely men.

Yet to our adolescent eyes, they were men not quite up to the mark. In their disciplined commitment to the Rule of St. Benedict, the monks of the abbey accepted—seemingly reveled in—their own individual insignificance. They had forsworn even the possibility of real achievement, accomplishment, or recognition, at least as such things were defined by the world at large. Unable even to conceive of significance except as the world defined it, we found this to be unfathomable. Wayfarers engaged in some incomprehensible quest, they had chosen to remain rooted in a single place. For us, St. Bede could never qualify as a destination. It was a transit point, a waystation through which one hastened en route to places of real importance. As a result, our evaluation of the men who had chosen to live out their lives there—even those for whom we felt affection and gratitude—was, at its kindest, patronizing. Life was passing them by, while we, dazzled by the cardboard-and-paste grandeur of Camelot and hungry with ambition, were eager to hurl ourselves into the "real" world.

In that world, events soon revealed that things were not what they were purported to be. Big Change came all right—to the country, the culture, the Church—but the results were hardly as promised. Much of it was disastrous, all of it disconcerting.

Responding to the tumult of the sixties—war, sexual revolution, and economic duress—St. Bede also changed. Although the campus still looks much as it did in my day, things are fundamentally different. The last boarder cleared out his locker years ago, and at roughly the same time, the school went coed: with these two decisions, St. Bede shed one identity and put on another. More significantly, as priestly vocations dried up (indeed, as several of the younger monks quit the abbey and priesthood altogether) and

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as age thinned the ranks of monks able to teach, lay teachers gradually supplanted them in the classroom. For a Catholic school in the 1990s, none of this qualifies as unusual. And the St. Bede that exists today—that continues to prosper and to serve the people of the Illinois Valley—may be in its way as good as the school that my father and I attended. But in the differences between what St. Bede was and what it has become there is loss.

However inconsequential in the larger scheme of things, St. Bede was a place where men strove to rise above paltriness. Woefully late I have come to understand that the lasting value of our education at their hands derived not from what we learned in the classroom but from their generosity in permitting us to glimpse the enterprise to which they were committed as men stubbornly aspiring to true freedom and the possibility of a genuinely purposeful life.

My own son today attends a Catholic high school for boys, a school run, needless to say, by lay people. They are well-meaning, dedicated, and competent. Yet inevitably, his own schoolboy experience differs from his father's and my own father's. Although my son carries on his own frustrating struggles with Latin and natural law, he will never view a priest as other than a remote and exotic creature, a figure to be approached with a mixture of wariness and respect. Deprived of intimate contact with men like those among whom I once lived—Timothy and Hugh, David and Marion, Roger and Andrew, Allen and Gabriel, Arthur and Claude, and all the rest—he is likewise deprived of the manly aspirations that they exemplified and that are now all but lost. Tempered only by the fact that my son's generation and those that follow will remain unaware of it, that loss is incalculable. FT

Diaspora

On the giant's hill, in the child's eye,
the old house stands hermaphrodite,
the mother-father rolled in light.
In brazen day, that Zion's done:
a trumpet cry to still the sun.

Beware, my love, beware, beware,
the sky's on fire and the air
is singed along its western rim.
Desire for day at dusk grows dim.

In the city's prism, in the schism light,
the rain bends down the neon night.
Unseen, sequestered daughters cry
and in his bed a young man mourns
the Babylon of traffic horns.

Cold heart beneath the city street,
the subway lines, the sewers' heat,
Cold heart that hates a lovers' twine,
why break my lover's heart from mine?

In the frozen zero, in the center night,
a cold heart plots against the light
and schemes to hide all range of sky.
The cities of the plain will change
my love to salt, her love to strange.

J. Bottum

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Augustine's World and Ours

Glenn Tinder

One of the most striking differences between constitutional democracies and tyrannies in our time pertains to certain habits of mind. In constitutional democracies, people tend to think in terms of dichotomies—faith and reason, church and state, public and private, executive and legislature. They are spontaneously wary of conceptual unification, and their wariness makes for divided powers and limited pretensions. In tyrannies—particularly when they are ideological and totalitarian—people tend to ignore or repudiate such dichotomies. A particular doctrine, like Marxist "science," is affirmed as a complete and undebatable truth; the state is looked on as a spiritual order alongside which a separate church would be pointless and disruptive; public life is equated with life itself, and private life is seen as either trivial or subversive; the executive power is regarded simply as the government, with the legislature a forum for propaganda rather than deliberation. Such habits of conceptual unification make for the concentrated power and unchecked pretensions that lead to the horrors so common in these regimes.

Saint Augustine is arguably the greatest exemplar and major source of the dichotomous habit of mind, with Locke, Montesquieu, and Burke merely his heirs. And yet, though he is as important in the development of modern democratic civility as any figure in the canon of political philosophy, he is often thought to exemplify religious extremism and intolerance. His thought admittedly is not entirely free of such qualities. Nonetheless, he manifested a stubborn suspicion of unifying concepts and was in this way on the side of moderation and tolerance. Most of Augustine's critics are unconscious beneficiaries of his habits of mind, even though the orderly societies and limited governments they enjoy do not exhibit Augustine's explicit ideals. These societies and governments, like Augustine himself, look in a very guarded way at worldly powers and realities.

Augustine thus contributed more than is generally realized to what is best in the modern political world. Ironically, however, he may have contributed also to what is worst. If so, his contribution was unintentional, for it stemmed from his doctrine of election, which is not explicitly either social or political. But in his handling of the doctrine he may inadvertently have helped to stimulate the modern passion for unification.

The Augustinian dichotomies are familiar. Some pertain to the outward world: empire and Church, history and eschatology, the pagan era and the Christian era. Other dichotomies pertain to the mind. These include the subjective, as illustrated by Augustine's explorations of our consciousness of time, and the objective, as exemplified in his efforts to establish the primary truths of Christian doctrine; they include also faith and reason, a polarity manifest throughout Augustine's writings.

There are other dichotomies. At the very center of Augustine's thought are antitheses pertaining to freedom and arising from the fact of sin—for example, freedom and the law, and freedom and grace. And of special note is the dichotomy of universality and particularity, the former inherent in the assumption that God and morality can be known in some part through the rational categories available to all human beings, the latter implied by the central Christian idea that God is not fully comprehensible in terms of general qualities but is a particular God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Above all other dichotomies is the famous antithesis of the City of God and the City of Man.

This is far from an exhaustive enumeration, but what shows forth in all Augustine's dichotomies is

GLENN TINDER *is Professor of Political Science Emeritus at the University of Massachusetts at Boston and author of* The Political Meaning of Christianity.

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his cast of mind. He habitually refrained from fusing antithetical social institutions, mental faculties, temporal periods, and the like. He tolerated, and even emphasized, polarities and tensions.

The dichotomies reflect a broken universe; they testify to human fallenness. Only because of our radical imperfection must there be a division, for example, between political and ecclesiastical authorities. Only for this reason is there history in all of its temporality, and only because we are fallen does history—ending without having eradicated the alienation and disorder in which it originates—call forth eschatology. The brokenness of the universe is manifest in the brokenness of historiography; the past falls into separate epochs, such as Hellenic and Christian, that we strive in vain to understand through a single narrative. We see our brokenness in other intellectual operations as well, divided as they are between introspection and observation, and between reason and faith. Were it not for our captivity to sin, freedom would simply be equivalent to righteousness, neither in tension with the moral law nor dependent at every moment on divine grace. And were we sinless we would behold, in the beatific vision, the absolute unity of divine particularity and divine universality.

Both poles, it should be noted, are fully legitimate, although not necessarily equal in dignity or logical rank. It is legitimate, for example, to adhere both to faith and reason, although faith outranks reason, so to speak, in the attainment of understanding and the ordering of life. It follows that the dichotomies are not merely stubborn facts. In some way and degree they are norms, and observing these norms is essential both to a balanced understanding of the human world and to the orderly conduct of human life. The dichotomy of church and state, for example, is a maxim of human wisdom recognized recurrently over a period of fifteen centuries or more, and ignoring it exposes societies to elemental disorder. Likewise, to identify the conclusions of faith and reason would throw all discourse into confusion, and to merge the Hellenic and Christian epochs would render history incomprehensible. Ignoring the dichotomies undermines civilized life. The scandal of totalitarianism lies in its unification of the mind and of all human existence. The distinctions and balances that underlie civilized human order are violently erased, and the consequence is unprecedented inhumanity.

Yet observing the dichotomies is not a task for which mere common sense suffices. Even the civilization of the Greeks was seriously flawed by an imperfect grasp of the dichotomies, along with an insufficiently restrained passion for unity. This is dramatically illustrated by the ideal Plato delineated in the *Republic*—an ideal at once spiritually inspiring and politically dismaying. Perceiving and respecting the dichotomies thus depends on more than the decency that refrains from brutal projects of unification such as those undertaken by Nazis and Communists in our time. It depends on understanding of a kind that is far from universal and, before dichotomous ways of thinking had been established, must have been rare.

It is surely one of the most significant facts concerning Augustine's mind—significant in relation to the unfolding of Western civilization since his time—that it possessed the necessary powers of discrimination and comprehension. His commitment to Christian revelation did not subvert his respect for Greek philosophy; and his unprecedented ability to probe what Isaiah calls "the secret heart" did not cause him to slight the need for outward authority. His sense of the overpowering spiritual significance of history did not lead him to the deification of history that Marx and his followers later carried out; rather, his vision of history was balanced by a vision of the end of history—a vision presupposing the tragic and inconclusive character of the historical drama. His intense consciousness of freedom did not blind him to the ways in which freedom is nullified by sin, necessarily checked by law, and dependent altogether on grace. And his commitment to the Catholic Church did not render him unaware of the imperfections of the Church or of the necessity that humankind be ruled by two swords, not one alone.

Augustine's comprehension of the dichotomies is remarkable in view of his impassioned temper. It is not hard to imagine Augustine as an extremist, as one of the "grands simplificateurs" foreseen and feared by Jacob Burckhardt. How can it be explained that this fiery African became a thinker of such uncommon poise and range?

It can be explained rather easily, I think, if we are looking for a theological, not merely psychological or historical, explanation. Augustine's extremist potentialities were fully realized in his love of the One Being who warrants and commands an extreme commitment. Augustine after his conversion found himself simultaneously under two divine imperatives: to love God absolutely and to have no idols. To love God rightly was to fulfill every passion; to avoid idolatry was to eschew extremism of every kind. For Augustine, then, God was the center that made it possible for him at once to set apart and to affirm the dichotomies. The love of God enabled him to be both an absolutist and a relativist—an absolutist in relation to the only reality that is absolute, a relativist in relation to the multitudinous realities that are finite and corruptible.

The character of Augustine's mind provides us with a key, I believe, to understanding the modern crisis. In the totalitarian dictatorships, the Augustinian dichotomies have been ruthlessly assaulted. In many other modern situations—among intellectuals in the Western democracies, for instance—they seem to have utterly decayed. Only in the common sense remaining in many ordinary democratic citizens do they remain intact.

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Some of the clearest examples of the modern disintegration of the dichotomies concern the inner world. Certain forms of existentialism insist that reality is accessible only through subjectivity; it is a striking sign of the imbalance of modern minds, however, that the era of existentialism is also that of positivism, which insists that reality is accessible only through objectivity. Modernity saw as well the polarization of faith and reason—a polarization dramatically evident at the outset of the modern period in the juxtaposition of the Reformation and the Renaissance. And three hundred years later the inability of the modern intellect to hold reason and faith in balance was dramatized by Hegel and Kierkegaard. Both have been unfairly simplified, but it is true to say that Hegel's idealism produced probably the most extreme claims ever made by a great philosopher on behalf of reason, while Kierkegaard, partly in reaction to Hegel, made our humanity depend on faith, and faith on defiance of reason.

When we look to the outer world for similar examples of the collapse of the dichotomies, we realize that another word for this collapse is "idolatry." The passion for unification manifests more often than not a search for a finite god. All around us, in place of the defeated dichotomies, we see political idols. No longer is there tension between spiritual authorities and temporal authorities; rather, society is under the simultaneously spiritual and temporal authority of one master race, one inspired leader, one legitimate party. Human beings are not members at once of two more or less discordant societies, one oriented toward eternity, the other toward the earth. All are members of a single society—perhaps a social class destined by history to represent perfectly the interests of all humanity, perhaps a state ostensibly serving the will of a superior race. History is not envisioned as a mysterious and tragic course of development finally engulfed by eternity; it is reduced to a Thousand Year Reich or a mere temporal process, trailing off triumphally into an era of endless earthly satisfactions.

The state has perhaps been the chief idol of modern man. Such entities as race and class are vague and intangible. They need the concrete embodiment that the state provides. Similarly, an idolized leader or party needs the apparatus of power that the state also provides. But the state is never a self-effacing servant of other gods. In its overwhelming power, its omnipresence, and its seeming immortality, it is the most enthralling of all idols.

One of the most decisive contributions to the development of modern liberty occurred in ancient times with the rise of the Church, which relativized the state. With the Church standing alongside, superior in dignity if not in earthly power, the state could not be regarded, as it was in the Periclean Age, as the uniquely suitable sphere for any life that is fully and distinctively human. No longer could it be said that man is merely a "political animal." Human lives and loyalties were divided, no longer subject to the exclusive claims of the state. The most bewitching of all idols was reduced to the status of a servant—a servant of Christian life in the Augustinian and medieval view, a servant of all legitimate private and public concerns in the modern view. If this relativization had not occurred, stable liberty could not have been achieved. But such relativization makes sense only in the context of the dichotomies. This is why the fading of the dichotomies has led to the rise of the absolute state and, in consequence, to the decline of liberty.

It is not difficult to see the cause of this process of disintegration: "the center did not hold." The divine center of Augustine's universe maintained a twofold sovereignty over human life. One aspect of this sovereignty was the idea of divine providence. God was held to govern the unfolding of human events in every detail. But God's governance was not coercive, at least not ideally so, and this brings us to the second aspect of divine sovereignty in Augustine. God required that human beings recognize and conform voluntarily to his governance; that is, he called for love—of God above all, and secondarily of God's human creatures. A righteous human being, a member of the City of God, was one whose whole life was focused, through love, on the universal sovereign who provides assurance that beneath the seeming chaos of history there is a meaningful order.

In the modern world, God's sovereignty in both of its aspects has largely vanished from human minds. To begin with, the idea that every occurrence in history and every detail in human lives accords with the will of God has—for secular minds—become implausible. With the disappearance from the modern mind of God's historical sovereignty, the other aspect of his sovereignty—that secured through love for God—also has disappeared. Expressions of charity of the kind poured out in the *Confessions* are scarcely comprehensible to the twentieth-century secular mind.

If modern doubt about the concept of divine historical sovereignty is not due to our having discovered that the concept is false, to what is it due? This is a question we can reflect on but probably cannot answer. In order to be conscious of Augustine's state of mind, however, it would be well to note that it is not a deeper experience of evil than Augustine had that arouses our doubts. It is true that our time has seen unique evils, such as the Holocaust. But the evils of Augustine's time were terrible enough to overthrow any faith in divine providence that depended on empirical impressions. Augustine and his contemporaries witnessed, after all, one of the most stunning tragedies of world history—the sack of Rome by barbarians in A.D. 410. While Augustine was writing his great treatise on divine providence, *The City of God,* the Roman Empire was visibly crumbling under barbarian assaults. Yet, for Augustine, the idea that history in every detail was ordered by God was over-

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whelmingly plausible.

Nonetheless, for whatever reasons, modern attitudes toward history are very different from Augustine's. Modern attitudes were expressed with great succinctness by Sartre when he said, through a character in his novel *Nausea*, that "*anything* can happen, *anything*." The modern mood is one of radical insecurity; nothing is so senseless or catastrophic that we can assume it will not befall us. As God has lost historical sovereignty in modern eyes, He has lost the power to call forth human love. The decisive occurrence in the collapse of the dichotomies may be simply this failure of man's love for the divine. God's historical sovereignty became implausible, and it began to seem that indeed "anything might happen," insofar as Jesus' Great Commandment was no longer obeyed.

The divine center that failed to hold did not, on disappearing, simply leave a void; it was replaced by various earthly objects of limitless love and trust, illustrating Dostoevsky's dictum that "man must bow down to something." If God is dethroned, we inevitably look for other gods and, on finding them, demolish the dichotomies. Life is wonderfully simplified. If limitless love for God requires articulation, relativization, and balance in one's relations with finite realities, limitless love for a finite reality, such as a leader or a nation, relieves us of the task of thus complicating our lives. It reduces us to Burckhardt's "grands simplificateurs."

The collapse of the dichotomies has in various ways fed the modern crisis. Not every twentieth-century horror is explained altogether by it; the destructiveness of modern wars, for example, is due in part simply to advances in technology. Still, many of the forces that trouble our times can be related, directly or indirectly, to the rise of idolatry. Revolutionary leaders such as Lenin and Mao have been able to claim godlike powers of historical reconstruction; wars have been encouraged by the chaos necessarily prevailing among competing idols; liberty, idolized and thus made absolute, is at the source of the moral anarchy evident in the Western nations; religion, no longer able to balance faith and reason, has in many places fallen back, as a desperate expedient, on a blind and angry faith. But one of the most fateful consequences of idolatry comes from granting absolute authority to reason. It consists in the denial of the ontological order—often referred to as "foundations"—that in past times often curbed the excesses of human pride.

Since the ancient Greeks, Western society has placed considerable reliance on reason, which was seen as a light enabling us to understand both the actualities of the universe and the requirements of the moral law. This reliance was as marked in the Middle Ages—in spite of its being "an age of faith"—as in ancient or modern times. But the Western confidence in reason had a corollary that concerns the fundamental nature of life and reality. This corollary declares that the power and significance of reason derive from the fact that there is an ordered reality outside the mind. This reality might be seen from one standpoint as simply the way things are—as the structure summarily described in scientific law. It might be seen from another standpoint, however, as telling us how things ought to be—as the source of "natural law." It could be affirmed both from a religious standpoint, as exemplified by Thomas Aquinas, and also from a secular standpoint, as evident in attitudes typical of the Enlightenment. Given its simultaneously factual and moral implications, it provided comprehensive grounds—"foundations"—for the conduct of human life.

Belief in such foundations has endured so long in Western history and has been so firmly implanted in our minds that for most people it is virtually synonymous with common sense. It has undergirded both the moral life and the scientific investigations of Western peoples. The startling fact, however, is that today this ancient intellectual edifice is, in the eyes of many leading thinkers, and in the eyes of their multitudinous followers in the universities and elsewhere, little more than rubble. To what extent such a state of affairs prevails in the minds not merely of intellectuals but of whole populations is difficult to determine with any precision. The disorder and despair so widely evident in modern society, however, make it obvious that it is not only among intellectuals that the foundations have been shaken. A great many people with no knowledge of postmodernism or deconstruction no doubt feel that the structures supporting life are somehow weaker than they once were.

The collapse of foundations began in what we might call the uprooting of reason. By this I mean simply that reason was necessarily placed on its own when the dichotomies faded. Separated from other sources of insight such as tradition and revelation, reason became autonomous, even sovereign. Although reason had for millennia played a vital role in civilization, it was in its uprooted state given a role beyond its powers. Moreover, following the logic of idolatry, reason itself became an idol.

This story has been made familiar to us by the greatest of the thinkers who took part in it, Friedrich Nietzsche. First there was a rebellion against God. Reason refused any manner of consultation with faith, claiming entirely for itself the prerogative of defining reality. But rebellion did not stop with the overthrow of God. It soon began to seem that the very structures which reason had supposedly been bringing to light were nothing more than forms which reason itself had imposed on the underlying chaos of reality. We can see this happening in the writings of Hume and Kant. Although both men

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were highly sober and responsible thinkers, they were lifted to prominence by a movement that Camus referred to with horror as "metaphysical rebellion." All foundations were being swept away. Both morality and science were losing their ontological grounds. Enormously impressive efforts were made to stem the tide of destruction, efforts exemplified particularly by Kant's moral philosophy. The twentieth-century philosophical scene, however, makes it plain that these efforts failed. Truth came to be defined in terms of inspired intuition (Bergson), practical success (Dewey), or personal perspective (Nietzsche).

The most elemental and conspicuous danger arising from this development is the disappearance of objective norms and values. "Everything is permitted," according to the maxim with which Dostoevsky characterized what he feared was the coming age. Such twentieth-century titans as Hitler, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao have shown us what it means in politics if everything is permitted. The newspapers' innumerable stories of corruption and crime depict personal lives lacking in all moral boundaries. Moreover, the limitless liberty this maxim claims is not only moral. It is epistemological as well: anything can be believed. Modern myths of racial purity and superiority illustrate how such liberty can be used. We are speaking, of course, of nihilism—the annihilation of all limits and standards.

A less obvious, if hardly less serious, danger inherent in the crumbling of foundations is the disappearance of the independent self, which comes to be understood as a function of language and society. The independent self of the past had been a reasoning and faithful being, and as such it had foundations on which to stand. Facing threats to its existence or its moral integrity, it could appeal to the ultimate grounds of life as disclosed in reason and revelation. When these grounds vanished, however, reason and faith no longer could uphold life, and the independent self was no longer viable. Thus again and again in present-day social and political writing we are told that individualism is altogether false and that all genuine human life takes place in society—a view that would largely do away with philosophical reflection and religious meditation. Heidegger typifies a wide range of modern thought when he reverses the commonsense notion that human beings speak through language; now it is language that speaks through human beings. It is not surprising that the very concept of solitude has disappeared from present-day social thought. There is nothing to sustain it. An individual who cannot inhabit an ontological structure—alone, if necessary—is compelled to fall back on one or another social structure, since not even the strongest and most creative person is capable of complete autonomy.

The displacement of the self from an ontological to a social structure necessarily results in the tacit idealization of society. Without an encompassing ontological structure, the social structure is beyond criticism. Lacking in grounds for social criticism, it has to be assumed that society provides a trustworthy order of life. However, it is one of the clearest verdicts of common sense (the common sense formed by traditional foundations) that it does not. Even though an individual cannot develop morally apart from society, the purest examples of morality are found among individuals and not among societies. Saints are all particular individuals, and societies as such are never saintly. But the idealization of society is nearly inescapable if there is no ontological framework that one may inhabit. Life must have a framework, and society is one such framework. But if there is no larger framework around society—and thus no way of criticizing and opposing society—we are compelled to assume that society is what it ought to be. We can now begin to understand the paradox pointed to by Tocqueville: although liberty is lauded, everyone conforms closely with reigning social norms.

The contrast with Augustine is dramatic. One of the main axioms of his thought was that there is only one society that is all that it ought to be, the City of God. Every earthly city—even the Church, the earthly city representing the City of God—is highly imperfect. This implies (although Augustine laid little stress on the implication) that an individual is not entirely fulfilled within any earthly society. It implies also (although it took more than a millennium to draw out the implication) that there was a place in life for solitude and need for a private sphere set off from the public sphere. We are touching here on some of the most valuable insights and institutions of modernity. But Augustine provided the basis for them, and losing the Augustinian basis, we are close to losing the insights and the institutions themselves.

My argument to this point can be summarized simply. Christian revelation discloses a merciful God and, at the same time, a fallen and broken world; life in this world requires the articulation and balancing of numerous dichotomies; these dichotomies support the assumptions and the order on which civilization depends; to hold them together in one's mind, however, and to hold them in balance in society, depends on a divine center; this center has been lost and with it there has necessarily been lost the capacity for sustaining civilized life. Everything depends, in the final analysis, on fidelity to God. This is why Augustine, as the first great God-centered philosopher in the West, played so essential a part in the recovery of the West from the catastrophe of the fall of the Roman Empire. It is also why the modern world, in its inability to preserve the breadth, complexity, and balance of Augustine's universe, has come so near to experiencing the collapse of Western civilization.

Augustine's vision, however, also contained seeds of later trouble. I am not concerned here with such well-known defects in Augustine's thought as his

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casual acceptance of slavery and his final acquiescence in the use of force to suppress religious dissent. Criticism of Augustine on these grounds seems to me, in itself, worth very little. It smacks of the kind of superficiality inherent in applying standards of "political correctness." The seeds of the real trouble in Augustine relate not directly to political matters but rather to the love of God that underlies the dichotomies.

A useful starting point in identifying this trouble may be found in an incongruity existing in the body of Augustine's writings. This is the strikingly different mood expressed in the *Confessions* and, many years later, in the penultimate book of *The City of God*. The former is ecstatic, the latter grim. The *Confessions* constitutes a rapturous utterance in praise of God, whereas Book XXI of *The City of God* is in large part a determined effort to demonstrate that it is not only possible, but indeed will come to pass, that the damned—assumed by Augustine to comprise a large part of the human race—will suffer excruciating physical and mental pain throughout eternity. He attacks every consideration that might somehow lessen our fear of everlasting torment. In the earlier work we see God as a being who incorporates in infinite measure every beauty, grace, and wonder that human beings can imagine or ever know; in the later work we see God as one who in his omnipotence can cause human bodies to burn forever without being consumed and who, in his implacable justice, can be relied on to see that they do.

It is perhaps unnecessary to say that difficult, if not intractable, theological problems are involved in trying to speak of the eternal consequences of human sin. But the issue is simply this: how can God treat evil, and the human beings who are the source of evil, with all requisite severity, yet also with unconditional love? The severity seems inescapable. God, as infinite goodness, must eradicate sin at its roots and deal justly with the perpetrators of sin. But the roots of sin are deep and all of us are stubborn perpetrators of sin; these are propositions inherent in the doctrine of original sin. How, then, can God root up and punish sin while remaining in his essential being fully and uncompromisingly a God of love? It is immediately apparent that Book XXI is not simply a gratuitous indulgence in cruel impulses lodged in Augustine's heart. Arguably, it is an inevitable inference from the doctrines of original sin and divine justice. Yet the picture of God that we form in reading Book XXI is not of a God who is purely and uncompromisingly love. It is a picture that fills us with dread.

Involved in this issue, and indicative of its absolute centrality, is the possibility of obeying the two commandments that Jesus set before us. The first and greatest of these, of course, was to love God with all of our heart and mind and strength. Can I accord such love to a God who is the source of eternal and nearly unbearable torment, perhaps for me, and almost certainly for some of my friends? The second commandment, as everyone knows, was to love our neighbors as ourselves. Can I do that in view of the realistic supposition that most of my neighbors are destined for Hell and presumably are execrated by God, rather than loved? These questions bear decisively on our relationship with the center that enables us to maintain the dichotomies.

It would be well to realize at the outset that we are unlikely to find any simple solution to the problem before us. The doctrine of universal salvation, for example, would not solve it. If everyone will assuredly be saved, regardless of how they live or what they do, freedom is trivialized. In making choices, nothing of lasting importance is at stake. Thus Augustine could not have affirmed universal salvation without shifting freedom from the core of his concerns. If humans have freedom of choice, and if this power is significant, it must have eternal consequences; there must be a real possibility of damnation. At only a slight risk of hyperbole, it might be said that if freedom is important then human beings have a right to be damned—if they so choose.

Nor can the problem of reconciling divine justice and mercy be solved by holding that only a minority will be damned. The picture Augustine paints in Book XXI is no doubt rendered more unsettling by the assumption that we are witnessing the fate of most of the human race. Still, the question is not primarily one of numbers. An individual, in the Christian scale of values, is of infinite worth. As seen by numerous writers, such as Dostoevsky and Camus, the suffering of only one innocent person places the justifiability of the whole universe in question. Graham Greene noted that one human body can contain all the suffering the world can contain. Thus if the divinely decreed end of all things turned out to be a state of paradise to which all of the human race, with the exception of merely one person, had been admitted, with that one person sentenced to spend eternity under torture, could we then feel, without reservations of any sort, that God is love?

The objection may be raised that it was not the suffering of someone of any sort that writers such as Dostoevsky and Camus found so unacceptable, but the suffering of someone who is *innocent*. I have left out guilt and justice (the objection might maintain) and it is precisely these that rendered Hell unproblematic in Augustine's thought. The sufferings of the damned were fully deserved. Hence Augustine assured his readers that the saints in paradise, even though no longer afflicted with memories of the evils they themselves had undergone, would be fully cognizant of the agonies undergone in Hell. As a spectacle of divine justice, this presumably would make their own bliss sweeter. It is because justice has

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seemed a decisive consideration that the suffering of children—assumed to be innocent—has often been the prime example cited by writers questioning the goodness, the power, or the very existence of God.

The issue before us, it must be remembered, is not whether there is innocent suffering. (On the premise of original sin, it is arguable that there is not.) The issue rather is whether there is any way in which everlasting suffering, or Hell, under the sovereignty of a God who is love, can be made acceptable to human understanding and conscience as these operate within the limits of earthly life. It is doubtful that there is. At least, the principle of justice does not show that there is. To begin with, the spectacle of suffering does not become delightful to us once we are satisfied that it is deserved. The thought that justice is being done would not make the odor of burning flesh or the sound of human screams a suitable component of paradise. There is sense—whether or not there is ultimate truth—in Nikolay Berdyayev's observation that if Hell is eternal, then evil will have won a kind of victory in spite of divine love.

In the second place, given the omnipotence of divine grace, why doesn't a God who is love save everyone? For Augustine, all are infinitely guilty, according to the doctrine of original sin, in that all in their innermost being repudiate God. All, then, deserve to be damned. But divine grace turns some back to the love of God, thus making them members of the eternal city. Why only some and not all? Objections to the doctrine of universal salvation, already cited, do not seem quite conclusive. For one thing, those objections were only to universal salvation being counted on in advance, not to its actually coming about. For another, it seems unfair for only some, and not all, to receive the immeasurably great favor of having their sins forgiven.

The only solution to the problem of upholding the sovereignty of divine love in the face of human evil, I suggest, is not a solution at all if we think of a solution as a verbal formula of some kind. The solution lies rather in acknowledging that, undiscerning as we are in our finitude and pride, we are unable to comprehend the ways of the infinite and eternal God. We cannot understand how the harsh work of destroying sin can be accomplished by one whose love for those who create sin is absolute. In short, the solution lies in recognizing the mystery of divine grace.

The nature of this mystery may be somewhat clarified by noting how enigmatic human freedom is in relation not only to grace but to the causal necessity we experience every day. As our judicial processes show, we must sometimes look at humans as entirely responsible for their own acts; but we must also sometimes admit the force of mechanical causality—which we refer to in these cases as "extenuating circumstances." But such compromises are makeshift and practical. We have no theories that make everything clear. We cannot, as Kant showed, construct an objective explanation of the relationship of freedom and causality. The incomprehensibility of grace in its relations with freedom presents a like enigma. If humans are dependent on grace for breaking free of sin, how can they legitimately be held personally responsible for their misdeeds? But if they are not thus dependent—if they are personally responsible—how can the Christian doctrines of original sin and divine omnipotence be true? The answer to these questions is hidden in the mystery of divine being and of divine creation and redemption.

Kant remarked that he placed limits on reason in order to make room for faith. That is what we do when we acknowledge the mystery of grace. We make room for the faith that God, although by the deepest necessity of his nature entirely intolerant of evil, is love. Does the God who is love finally and irrevocably destine some people, perhaps even most people, to eternal suffering? We cannot certainly know. But Christians at least think that they know, through Christ, that God is love. On that basis they can know that if God engages in the work of eternal damnation then somehow that work must be dominated and directed by the work of salvation. The eschaton must be an absolutely luminous and undefiled manifestation of divine love.

Now Augustine shows in some of his major works that he was fully cognizant of the mystery of God's being and sovereign power. An example is the way in which, in *The Trinity*, he is at pains after working out the analogy between the structure of the human psyche and the divine Trinity to say that the analogy is remote and God's nature beyond our comprehension. Again, in *The City of God*, although his aim is that of showing that history is altogether meaningful in spite of the fall of Rome, he does not, in the manner of Hegel and Marx, try to display the overall pattern of history; he is content to leave almost all past events enshrouded in the mystery of divine providence.

In the eschatological vision he delineated in Book XXI, however, and the picture of human destiny he bequeathed to later ages, the mystery has grown very dim. There seems little room for divine mercies so multitudinous and powerful that even the work of damnation will be turned into a work of love. Indeed, Augustine seems to come near the doctrine of what is often called "double predestination"—that God not only saves some through a decree of divine election but condemns others through a decree of divine rejection. Most human beings can do nothing to save themselves from eternal torment, and God—justly, albeit not mercifully—will do nothing to save them.

One result of such a view is that the very possibility of universal salvation is precluded. The first letter of Timothy asserts of "God our savior" that "he desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." And that must be so if God is love. As already noted, if universal salvation is regarded as a

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certainty rather than merely a possibility, freedom is trivialized. If it is not regarded even as a possibility, however, the quality of Christian charity is significantly affected. God is more readily thought of as an implacable guarantor of justice than as the source of a multitude of tender mercies. And one's fellow human beings are more readily looked upon with disdain or horror than with love.

Another result of Augustine's eschatology is an impression of what we might call divine inflexibility. Here Augustine diverged from Paul, even though he presumably did not intend to. In his letter to the Romans, Paul discusses divine election and divine rejection, not as irrevocable decrees but as acts playing a part in a divine strategy of salvation. Divine rejection is not simply a decree of damnation; it is designed to prompt "jealousy" among the rejected, and in this way to call forth a saving change of heart. It is noteworthy that one of Paul's greatest contemporary followers and interpreters, Karl Barth, has based on Paul a doctrine that at least contains hints of universal salvation. A God who in choosing some and rejecting others is pursuing a strategy motivated by love for all looks rather different from a God who has pronounced an irreversible judgment of damnation on most members of the human race. Yet the God of Book XXI looks much more like the latter than like the former.

It must be remembered that we are not concerned here with Augustine's inner mind but rather with the general outlook he transmitted to succeeding centuries. That outlook renders God exceedingly fearful. It is of course quite proper to fear God in a certain sense of that word: to be in awe before him and to think little of one's own righteousness. But to be terrified of God, and to approach death in an agony of fright, is not to evince Christian fear. Bertrand Russell is no doubt an unsafe guide in matters of Christian theology, but he probably conveys accurately an impression in the minds of most literate people, and not wholly unfair to Augustine, when he characterizes Augustine's views concerning predestination as a "ferocious doctrine." My argument is that this doctrine contributed—not in Augustine's own mind, but in coming centuries—to the fact that "the center did not hold."

The most obvious way it did this was by turning people away from God. Some people will continue to worship a terrifying God, probably by finding reasons for thinking that they themselves do not belong to the vast mass of the damned. Many people, however, will flee from the presence of such a God. That is, they will deny that God exists. A God who condemns a large part of the human race to eternal torment invites rebellion. In modern times, of course, that rebellion has occurred. And in consequence the dichotomies have suffered devastation.

Manifestly, Augustine's own love of God was powerful during most of his mature life. Indeed, the main principle of Augustine's whole vision of life and history was the love of God. This is what decided the fateful issue of one's membership in the city of God or the city of man. And it underlay the poise that enabled one to participate at once in the Church and in secular society, to live responsibly in history yet in readiness for the end of history, to draw on pagan wisdom while maintaining the supremacy of Christian revelation. It gave one the spiritual power needed for entering the deep recesses of the hidden self while continuing to respect and obey the objective Church, for following reason indefatigably while adhering unquestioningly to Christian faith, and for bearing the burden of freedom—a burden consisting in the knowledge that freedom misused could bring the eternal loss of absolutely everything of value. The love of God, in short, made it possible to sustain the dichotomies. The strength of Augustine's love of God is manifest in the strength of the dichotomies in his life and thought.

Nonetheless, in Augustine presumably, as in every human being, the love of God was not an entirely uncontested motive. Augustine may have been always of a divided mind, entertaining impressions of divine wrath and justice that rested uneasily in company with his primary affirmation of divine beauty and mercy. Or he may have changed in some degree; one of his most sympathetic interpreters, John Burnaby, remarks in his *Amor Dei* that "nearly all that Augustine wrote after his seventieth year is the work of a man whose energy has burnt itself out, whose love has grown cold." One or the other hypothesis seems to be needed to account for Book XXI—destined for as wide an audience as anything else Augustine ever wrote, apart from the *Confessions*. In any case, it appears that Augustine himself may have inadvertantly weakened the center that he so much loved and that was so vital to the social and political vision which he embodied in his writings and taught to a civilization.

Hatred simplifies; it seeks a reduction of the human race to friends and enemies. Love, however, bears complexities. This is why it sustains the dichotomies and, in turn, sustains civilization. But love has only one adequate object, and that is God. Deprived of that object, it devotes itself to lesser objects, but in doing this turns into fanaticism. Perhaps the heart of the modern crisis is that love has lost its object. Thus the dichotomies fade and civilization totters. The one question I have raised about Augustine is whether, with his ideas on predestination, he unintentionally created a tributary flowing into the stream of thought that eventually led to this crisis. Answering that question, however, is far less important than recovering the dichotomous habit of mind, of which Augustine is probably the major creator and the greatest representative. FT

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Russia Repents?

Vladimir Osherov

For anyone watching events in Russia, the confrontation between "reformers," led by Boris Yeltsin, and their opponents, Communists and nationalists, has become almost self-explanatory: forces of the past against forces of progress; the defeated seeking a comeback against the will of the majority. Still, results of some recent elections have posed a question: why do so many ordinary Russians vote for the Communists rather than patiently endure some predictable hardships of a transition period? Were not seventy years of Communist dictatorship enough?

Konstantin Leontiev, the nineteenth-century conservative thinker and nationalist, once claimed that "a Russian can be a saint but he cannot be honest." Philosopher Nikolay Berdyayev, commenting on this, wrote in 1918:

> The Russian man was required, first and foremost, to be humble. As a reward for the virtue of humility he was given everything and granted permission to do anything. Humility, in fact, was the only form of personal discipline. It was better to sin in humility than to pridefully perfect yourself. The Russian man habitually thinks that dishonesty is no great evil, provided he himself remains inwardly humble, not proud, not arrogant. You may humbly repent even for the greatest crime; as to smaller sins—they are taken away by lighting a candle to an icon of a saint. . . . A Russian may be a reckless swindler or criminal but deep down he reveres sainthood and seeks salvation through the saints, through their intercession. Some predator and human monster may very sincerely, in true veneration, worship sainthood, place candles in front of saints' icons, embark on pilgrimages to monasteries—remaining at the same time a predator and a monster.

On April 20, 1997, the Orthodox Palm Sunday in Moscow, in jam-packed churches, a certain group of worshipers, clad in expensive but rather tasteless garb, stood out. They had the typical appearance of a 1990s Russian "biznesmen." You would hardly see those people in church on any other day. They resolutely pushed their way through the shabbily dressed crowd (there are no pews in Russian churches) in every direction, huge packs of candles in their hands, setting them up and lighting them in front of literally every icon in the church: the Savior, the Mother of God, all available saints and martyrs. The very number of candles (and they are not cheap, by Russian standards) indicated not only wealth but also a degree of repentance. Their flushed, sweaty countenances radiated excitement, a sense of doing the right thing, and faith. This was both touching and bizarre (especially their "trendy" apparel, a status symbol, almost a uniform), and very Russian: to sin with abandon and then to repent, with the same abandon.

I remembered an essay by Alexandr Solzhenitsyn, written in 1971 and rarely cited nowadays, where he called for repentance and self-restraint as the keys to Russia's future revival. It made me wonder: the Palm Sunday repentance that I had just witnessed, sincere as it was—is this the repentance Solzhenitsyn had in mind? No, the writer actually spoke of *national* repentance, not of repentant individual sinners. In fact, in the early days of Gorbachev's reforms, when many crimes of the old regime were, at last, officially admitted, it did look as if a national repentance was at hand. As for "self-restraint," Solzhenitsyn also meant national self-restraint, an end to imperial expansionism, reconciliation between the Russians and other ethnic groups of the USSR.

The advent of Yeltsin radically changed the mood.

VLADIMIR OSHEROV *is a Russian translator and author currently residing in Westmont, Illinois.*

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Instead of reconciliation, Yeltsin, to begin with, disbanded the Soviet Union, leaving twenty-five million ethnic Russians beyond Russia's borders, residing as second-class aliens in the "newly independent states"; then he tried to ban the Communist Party (of which he himself and 90 percent of his political allies were recent members, along with another thirty million Soviet citizens). A subsequent and equally ill-fated bid to introduce capitalism in Russia made a few people very rich but left many millions of others stripped of all their savings. These developments have been even less conducive to national repentance or reconciliation, as were Yeltsin's further dealings with political opposition in his bombardment of the Parliament and war in Chechnya. And, as time goes by, the number of bitter people in Russia seems only to increase.

As Peter Reddaway, Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at George Washington University, wrote in 1993:

> To try to launch simultaneously a political revolution, an economic revolution, and a social revolution, in a national culture that was not in fact ready for revolution at all, was to impose an intolerable burden on the Russian people. It is something much worse: a many-layered feeling of moral and spiritual injury, a loss of . . . one's sense of self and society, bewilderment and frustration at the gaping divisions among one's own people. . . . Emotional wounds as deep as these tend to breed anger, hatred, self-disgust, and aggressiveness.

Do they also tend to make dishonesty more acceptable? Harvard's Jeffrey Sachs, former economic adviser to the Russian government, had to concede the failure of his economic program, citing as the main reason the sheer scale of corruption and crime. The former Russian finance minister complained on Moscow radio that although hundreds of thousands of foreign cars have been imported and are registered and used in Russia, no one knows how exactly they were brought into the country and why the treasury has not received a penny of import duties. This means that both the customs service and taxation authorities at all levels have their share in illegal profits. Most other taxes are simply not being collected. It is virtually impossible to run a legitimate and honest business enterprise in Russia. Burdened by deliberately inflated tax rates, Russian businessmen are forced to become tax-cheats and thus easy targets for extortion. Crime cartels specializing in "protection" get their tip-offs directly from taxation officers. American entrepreneur Paul Tatum, before being murdered in Moscow in 1995, told journalists that any foreign businessman who denies paying protection money is telling "an outright lie."

At the House International Relations Committee hearings on organized crime in Russia, April 30, 1996, CIA Director John Deutch stated, "A link between the governing elite and the criminal elements impedes the ability of the Russian government to meet the population's expectations of social justice, the quality of opportunity and improved living standards." Russian bureaucracy has grown larger and more corrupt than it was when the Soviet Union was intact. (Russia's population now is around 150 million against the USSR's 290 million.) Predictably, this has not done the Russian people any good. In fact, all sections of society, except the bureaucracy and the "new Russians," are as powerless as they were under the Communists—the new "democratic" Constitution notwithstanding. The last election was won by Yeltsin only through lavish (and still undisclosed) financial backing from the "Big Seven," a group of top Russian bankers, who also happen to own all TV networks and most newspapers in the country. Since then, Yeltsin has been trying hard to return the favor. Appointment of billionaire Boris Berezovsky as deputy chief of the Security Council is just one example.

Media censorship is back in force. New owners of the Russian media prevent publication of any reports detrimental to their interests. *Izvestia*, the most influential and staunch supporter of Yeltsin's reforms, has balked recently at attempts by its present owner, the oil conglomerate LUKOIL, to control editorial content. Other papers, though, comply just as in the good old days of communism. At the 1996 congressional hearings, Dr. Louise Shelley testified:

> There is . . . intimidation of the press and journalists domestically and internationally. Journalists on a regional level and nationally . . . are subjected to what we would consider the traditional tactics of organized crime when they try to disclose problems of localized corruption and organized crime. . . . And significant financial resources of Russian organized crime are limiting press freedoms abroad by using intimidating law suits to stifle revelations in European and American newspapers.

Unauthorized, random telephone tapping in Russia is being conducted on a much larger scale than it was under the KGB. In reality, the constitutionally guaranteed freedom of speech is benefiting mostly producers and sellers of pornography.

Consequently, Western support for Yeltsin on the grounds that he is promoting democracy looks more and more dubious. NATO's expansion into Eastern Europe seems to indicate that, despite protestations to the contrary, Russia is still deemed a potential threat and, as recent spying scandals in the U.S. confirm, Russia will hardly ever be a true ally. So why the support? Is Yeltsin seen as a guarantor of Russia's weakness? Whatever the reasons, the costs of sup-

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porting Yeltsin are being paid primarily by the Russian people, and the rise of popular anti-Americanism is far more ominous than any spying conducted by government agencies. Assisting in the destruction of Russia may prove not only morally questionable, it could also be short-sighted. Isn't this the way Germany was treated after her defeat in World War I?

Russia, or Moscow at least, bears more and more resemblance to the popular image of the pre-Hitler Weimar Republic's panoply of social decay: hoodlums, prostitutes, pimps, beggars, drunks, criminals, feverish excitement, and looming violence. There are other, more significant similarities: economic chaos, unemployment, the rise of political extremism. But there is also a moral analogy. It was, to a large extent, the de-moralization of Germany that brought Hitler to power. When Germans were asked to choose between Communists and Nazis, they chose the latter. Nazis, at least, were patriots, not Comintern agents. But the very fact that Hitler's racist, extremist agenda won so many votes clearly points to a moral blindness. The rot began not with Hitler. It started much earlier, with the advent of a liberal—and quite decadent—democracy, prematurely adopted after the Kaiser's abdication.

Back in 1987, when I arrived in Moscow after an absence of six years, I was struck by the extraordinary freedom with which people were openly discussing things that, a few years earlier, would be shared only with the closest friends. Fear of the KGB and its informants was gone completely. But instead of being grateful to Gorbachev for introducing "glasnost," Russian artists, filmmakers, and academics were engaged in an all-out assault on any remaining limitations and taboos. Ironically, very few of those people were ever dissidents or outspoken champions of freedom of speech. Most of them had been typical conformists. But now, sensing the regime's weakness, they were simply provoking Gorbachev, competing, in front of each other, for the dubious status of a rebel—now, when it was completely safe to do so. There was absolutely no sense in this, no purpose—only a manifestation of a deep-seated nihilism. These people, ultimately, provided critical moral support for Yeltsin in his power struggle with Gorbachev.

I recall also what Maxim Gorky wrote in the early 1920s, on human demeanor at times of revolution and social upheaval: "A bitter man, when given the chance to settle scores, is frightening. It is this man whom social reformers should, in the first place, be thinking of." This is the "root of bitterness" to which St. Paul refers in Hebrews 12:15. Such bitterness is precisely what drives Russian intellectuals to become willing accomplices of swindlers and thugs—anything is better (they contend) than the hated Communists. And signs of bitterness start at the very top: Yeltsin's vendetta against Gorbachev, his drinking habits, his disloyalty and irresponsibility.

The goal of any nation is justice, prosperity, and social order, not democracy or capitalism per se. These are only means. To be successful, free enterprise and democracy require some important preconditions, first of all, firm moral foundations. In the West, this was provided by Christianity; in Southeast Asia, by patriarchal, hierarchical social structures, family traditions, and a strong work ethic. None of these exist in Russia, not after decades of enforced atheism and everyone's dependency on the State, where private enterprise had been demonized and criminalized. In the mind of the average Russian there is something inherently dishonest in making money: "All great fortunes were made in a criminal way." That's why the criminal element in modern Russian entrepreneurship is viewed as something almost natural.

The suspicion of enterprise is a traditional Russian Orthodox attitude, reinforced by decades of Communist indoctrination. "Making money means taking advantage of other people." The history of capitalism certainly has many instances of greed, dishonesty, and fraud. But "criminal capitalism" has been proved long ago to be a lie, invented and successfully circulated by socialists in the nineteenth century. As Friedrich von Hayek wrote, we still have "this legend of the deterioration of the position of the working classes in consequence of the rise of capitalism. . . . Who has not heard of the 'horrors of early capitalism' and gained the impression that the advent of this system brought untold new suffering to large classes who before were tolerably content and comfortable? . . . A more careful examination of the facts has, however, led to a thorough refutation of this belief. Yet [long] after the controversy has been decided, popular opinion still continues as though the older belief [was] true."

The canard about the "horrors of early capitalism" is now being cited in Russia as an all-purpose justification, proof that widespread crime, on the one hand, and widespread suffering, on the other, are inevitable corollaries of capitalism. It is commonly claimed that after big-time gangsters satisfy their greed they'll evolve into conscientious businessmen and the rule of law will be automatically restored—"as it has happened in America." Yegor Stroyev, Speaker of the Federal Assembly (Russia's Senate), put it this way:

> Just look at the succession of leaders during the last few years. They all left office rich people, having lined their pockets very nicely at the expense of the nation. And none of them has been put in jail. Naturally, a question arises: why? We have ideologists who claim that we are undergoing a stage when property-owners are being born, and that the initial accumulation of capital was never achieved by honest means. There was always criminality, always a

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> Klondike. So now we are living through the times of a Russian Klondike.

In other words, we just have to wait. So, rather than fighting crime, a socialist fabrication is used to boost cutthroat capitalism.

In explanation of why so many in Russia vote for Communists and nationalists, most observers go immediately into a litany of bad traits in the Russian psyche: delusions of grandeur, imperial ambitions ("Moscow—the Third Rome"), Russian nostalgia for an "iron hand," traditional Russian collectivism, etc. All this may well be true, which makes it unlikely to be cured by a forceful introduction of freedom and democracy. Jeane Kirkpatrick wrote in her famous essay, "Dictatorships and Double Standards": "No idea holds greater sway in the minds of educated Americans than the belief that it is possible to democratize governments, anytime, anywhere, under any circumstances. This notion is belied by an enormous body of evidence based on the experience of dozens of countries."

There were other features of the Stalin era, besides the "iron hand," that make people somewhat nostalgic. I remember the early 1950s and my old public school in downtown Moscow. There were no private schools in the Soviet Union, and we had a virtual cross section of Moscow's population: children of the ruling class, driven to school in chauffeured limousines, and kids from neighborhood slums with communal apartments and basements where a dozen families shared one bathroom and one kitchen. We had sons of alcoholics, army invalids, factory workers, street cleaners, and widows. There were also boys from "middle-class" families, who lived nearby.

So, on the one hand, there was arrant social inequality, on the other—we were all equal, treated equally by our teachers, taught together, punished together, although, naturally, there were some teachers' pets. All wore the same drab uniform, so you couldn't distinguish yourself by sporting fancy clothes. Close friendships developed between "upper" and "lower" kids, some of them lasting to this day. We didn't feel intimidated by signs of wealth or power, nor were we envious. Poverty was much in evidence and no one pretended otherwise. Fundraising events were organized regularly to buy shoes and clothing for the poorer kids. People gave as much as they could.

In hindsight, I marvel how people would find quiet ways to do good in defiance of the official "party line"—considering that officially in Stalin's Russia everyone was supposed to be happy and prosperous, and charity was practically banned. How was this possible? Because we all were victims of a monstrous utopian ideology, involved in a common tragedy that equalized and united? Perhaps, but to me this is just another illustration of how real life can be far more complex than any theories, paradigms, or dreams of social engineering—democratic or totalitarian—can grasp. And looking at the new "free-market" inequality, now so rampant in Russia, looking at the "new Russians" and their offspring, I strongly doubt they will sacrifice anything for anybody else's good. I hope I am wrong.

One of the best-known living Russian writers, a brilliant man whose novels have been translated and published around the world, complained recently that he had to remove his son from a prestigious Moscow private school and enroll him in an ordinary public school because the boy, surrounded by boastful and arrogant kids of the new elite, felt deeply depressed: his dad was only a well-known author, not a millionaire "biznesmen," not a Mercedes owner. In my school days, any little brat who would dare flaunt his parents' wealth in this manner would end up with a bloodied nose and be virtually ostracized. Not any more.

I would never vote for the Communists, but I understand why some people do. In 1992, a group of Russian Orthodox priests, deputies of the Moscow City Council, introduced a bill to restrict sales of pornographic material on the streets of Moscow. The only other deputies who supported the motion were Communists; all the "democrats" voted against it, and it never passed.

Doctors in the Soviet Union, together with school teachers and engineers, were always paid meager wages. A factory worker or truck driver would earn much more. And still, I remember very clearly, in the 1950s and 1960s it was considered a disgrace for doctors to take cash-in-hand from their patients for some special type of treatment. It was not because of fear of punishment. This was part of the doctors' ethics, a tradition going back to the times of the idealistic provincial "zemsky" doctors. This tradition survived Stalin's rule but started falling apart at the first signs of liberalization under Khrushchev and Brezhnev. The concept of self-sacrifice has always been more familiar to the Russian mind than the enlightened self-interest and individualism of the West. Today, when widespread corruption is easily explained away by low wages, Russia, indeed, needs self-restraint. But who could teach the Russian people self-restraint now? Who will provide role models?

In the meantime, the economic situation, even according to official statistics, shows no signs of improvement. It may be predicted that the first actions of any future leaders of Russia (regardless of how they come to power) will involve distancing themselves from the present regime and taking steps to "correct mistakes." No doubt a more active economic role for the government will be adopted. The face of Russian laissez-faire has turned out to be too ugly.

Berdyayev wrote at the time of World War I: "An orgy of predatory instincts, of disgraceful greed and

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speculation at the time of the great world war and of enormous trials for Russia, remains our greatest shame, a dark stain on our national life, an ulcer on Russia's body. The drive for enrichment has captivated too many sections of Russian society." These words sound as if they were written today, but prior to 1914, the Russian economy was the fastest growing in the world, and Russian life, generally, was much more satisfying than under the Communists or today. What was different? It may have been the fact that many more churches were open, where sinners could confess, repent, and in time become better human beings. Now, for the first time in eighty years, Russia enjoys religious freedom, and thousands of newly built or restored churches have opened their doors to repentant sinners. And fear of God may prove, after all, the best teacher of honesty. But relearning honesty will take a long, long time.

Throughout modern history, dangers inherent in human nature, and the consequent need for moral education based on religion, have been repeatedly, and to deadly effect, ignored, whether by champions of laissez-faire or of the welfare state or of communism. This is where extremities meet: in the rejection of God. In today's Russia neither freedom, nor democracy, nor free enterprise have proved capable of generating moral values.

To govern a nation like Russia, with many saints and many more crooks—repentant and unrepentant—future leaders will have to, first of all, ensure that order is restored: crime is punished, working people are paid their wages, honest businessmen are able to conduct honest business, and, most importantly, churches are open and children taught personal responsibility and self-restraint. Perhaps then will come a genuine national repentance, and Russia will start healing old wounds. Until then, no democracy in Russia will be possible. FT

If God Is That Sublime Moment

If God is that sublime moment
in the story when Jesus said,
"And his father seeing him afar off . . . "
which could mean, of course,
that he had been watching every day for years,
longing for him,
straining to see him afar off—
it's that *afar off* that moves me . . .

or perhaps he only watched
in the late afternoon
thinking he would try to get home before dark,
or early in the morning
after pressing on all through the night,
or at high noon
when his father stood
shadowless under the sun
and remembered his son's
innocence and sweetness . . .

or perhaps it was just by chance
he saw him
when he looked up
from repairing a harness
or tying a new broom
or from a nap in his favorite chair,
suddenly there he was,
his lost son
coming home . . .

or perhaps he only saw him
because it was his birthday—
his,
not his son's—
when his eldest,
forgetting the persistence of an old man's dream,
said, "Make a wish, Father,"
and he did
and looked up . . .
seeing him afar off.

Warren L. Molton

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Books In Review

Ambivalent Obsession

THE CURSE OF CAIN: THE VIOLENT LEGACY OF MONOTHEISM. By REGINA M. SCHWARTZ. *University of Chicago Press. 211 pp. $22.95.*

***Reviewed by* James Alison**

A SUBTITLE LIKE "The Violent Legacy of Monotheism" suggests what Regina Schwartz does in fact at least partially deliver with *The Curse of Cain*: yet another piece of highly marketable radical academic *ressentiment*, to be welcomed by those who applaud such things and decried by those who revile them. But Schwartz's subtitle and the predictable reactions to it do not quite exhaust what is present in the author's ambivalent "critique of the system of thought broadly known as monotheism." Though the book has received some trashings (notably by Peter Berkowitz in *The New Republic*), *The Curse of Cain* may be—as Mark Twain said of Wagner's operas—better than it sounds.

The cleverest calumnies employ a technique that manages to give the lingering impression of something bad without ever quite formulating an accusation that might be rebutted, and it is true that Schwartz indulges that technique throughout her book—the stage villain of biblical monotheism sparing her the task of examining the ways in which actual monotheists live with the Bible. But she also gives clues of something else, a vision that—in the collapse of the obsession with which she began her book—shimmers just beyond her grasp.

The notion of writing *The Curse of Cain*, the author tells us, sprang in part from her own "obsessions about God" and in part from a student who punctured a class on the Exodus by asking, "What about the Canaanites?" With such starting points, Schwartz is simultaneously raising that most biblical of questions—What about the victim?—and acknowledging what a challenge it has been historically to bring monotheistic discourse to bear positively on that question.

These are real questions, and when she utters the postmodern cliché, "Conflict is only generated by the familiar commitment to One; Creativity is generated by the Many," I suspect that she doesn't re-

JAMES ALISON *holds the T. L. James Chair of Religion at Centenary College in Shreveport, Louisiana. His latest book,* The Joy of Being Wrong: Original Sin through Easter Eyes, *is forthcoming from Crossroad.*

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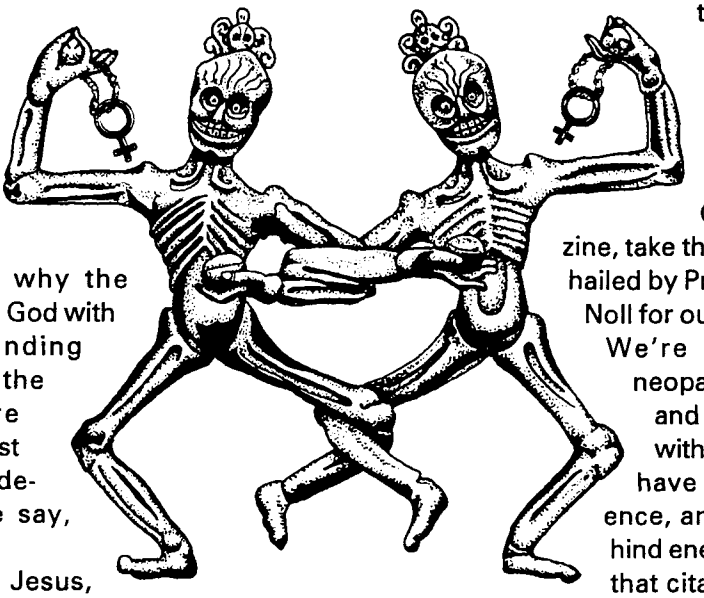
The Mass is the consummation of the love of Christ (the Bridegroom) for His Bride (the Church), and the priest at the altar represents the Bridegroom. But if, as Sister Shrew insists, there ought to be *women priests*, then a woman can be a Bridegroom and, presto, "same-sex marriage" *is* legitimate.



So now you see why the people who are replacing God with a goddess and demanding priestesses are often the same people who are pushing the homosexualist agenda. The common denominator is, shall we say, sexual confusion.

But there's more: Jesus, who came down from Heaven and was therefore in a position to know with certainty, called God our *Father*. But if Jesus was wrong about this, and Fr. Flake knows better, then Jesus wasn't the Son of God, wasn't a member of any Trinity — indeed, was an impostor.

And if, as Sister Shrew is forever telling us, "sexism" is a sin, then Jesus *sinned* when He chose only males for His priesthood, and therefore could hardly be divine.

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ally believe it: her own work tells her that univocal obsessives are much more likely to be creative than cocktail party flibbertigibbets who constantly espouse multiple positions. Univocal obsessions are very dangerous, but they can also issue in real creativity—obsession transformed into something quite different that would not have been born except through obsession.

SCHWARTZ HAS TWO very proper insights. The first is that identity forged over against others is violent, because the "other" is always conceived as despicable. And the second is that sibling rivalry is in some way tied to the concept of a jealous monotheism with a scarcity of blessings for distribution. These insights are at work in each of her five chapters. She shows how the covenantal invention of identity can be violent, in both ancient Israel and modern states. Discerning the violence that links ownership of land to a jealous monotheism, she examines the idea of kinship, showing the violence in the biblical texts that tell of the development of family identity in Israel.

She then follows the biblical narrative into the complexities of Israel's coalescence into a "nation"—turning aside to critique the modern (and especially German) critics who often read the Bible as though ancient Israel had developed in the same way modern nation-states develop. Similarly, when she directs her analysis to the ways in which memory is used to construct identity, she gives a fine demonstration of how the Exodus narrative can be used as a weapon by former victims who use their victim status to bash others. Many of these readings are very much in line with the New Testament's take on the same aspects of monotheism—of which Schwartz is, in fact, often aware. Sometimes, indeed, it seems as though her critique is really directed at the false innocence of a crusading Protestant metanarrative present in Cromwellian England and in a panoply of ways in America since its founding: the nation as the new Israel, the newly chosen people.

Quite a bit of this is interesting and much of it true. In her last chapter, however, she argues something seriously dangerous. Describing the potential for violence in memory's construction of identity, she advocates forgetfulness and insists on the good to be gained by celebrating a proliferating multiplicity of stories. The evil of such a position can be shown by the simple test of applying it to the Nazi Holocaust. No, we must not forget six million dead. And No—a thousand times No—we cannot, must not celebrate delightfully diverse stories that read the mouth-stopping horror of the Holocaust as the playfulness of power or a

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symphony of creativeness through death. The multiplicity of stories runs aground on the rock of the victim.

Throughout the book, even while the author is correctly pointing out the violence monotheism can foster, there are hints of a biblical solution just beyond her grasp—a vision of God marked by a lack of rivalry and a plentiful generosity. It is a vision that (as she indicates on two occasions) "is difficult to sustain." But if it were sustained, it would undo much of what she has criticized. This is the most interesting feature of *The Curse of Cain*: Schwartz is swaying on a fence. Even while she almost (but not quite) says that biblical monotheism is the cause of violence, she almost (but not quite) realizes that biblical monotheism is the origin of her own ability to denounce violence—the Bible the unique text that *reveals* the structure of violence in sibling rivalry and victimization rather than covering it over with the powerful patinas of mythology. [On this point see René Girard, "Are the Gospels Mythical?" FT, April 1996 —*Eds.*]

This is linked to Schwartz's ambivalent relation to Freud. Realizing, for instance, that family rivalry is often provoked by jealous fathers rather than by sons with inescapable Oedipal Complexes—ontological parricides, as it were—she has almost managed to let go of a specifically paternal form of rivalry. She doesn't manage, however, to take the next step and see what Dostoyevsky knew and Freud missed: Such fathers are intergenerational sibling rivals, and not fathers at all. In biblical terms this means: Call no man your father, for you are all brothers. In pop-psychology terms, it means: Give up blaming father-figures, using them as excuses.

FOR SCHWARTZ, Cain is the victim of a capricious God. But it is only one step from this to the realization that Cain *needs* a capricious God in order to see himself as a victim. If Cain could abandon his false notion of a capricious God, he could see himself and God in truer ways: himself as a fratricide who, realizing his crime, may be able at last to learn responsibility; God as the generous fount that makes possible the perspective of Abel. (The resources are available in *The Curse of Cain* for this reading, were Schwartz willing to apply to the Cain story the same analysis she brings to bear in her fine treatment of Joseph as undoing the work of Cain.)

I suspect there is a name for the reason that Schwartz remains on the fence—for her near vision and her inability to bring herself quite to denounce biblical monotheism as the cause of violence and indulge the *ressentiment* her subtitle reasonably leads her readers to expect. And that name is "John Milbank." Acknowledged in the preface, the British theologian and author of the influ-

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ential *Theology and Social Theory* (1993) is recognizable in such Milbankian phrasings as "non-identical repetitions" and in the author's mention of Soren Kierkegaard.

Milbank's intelligent and theologically informed analysis of what we mean by "the Other" gives us the resources to undo from within the work of the deconstructionists—those postmodern philosophers and critics who hunt down and denounce any construction of identity forged in opposition to others, and yet who depend on those wicked "other-using" others to forge their own identities. I rather think Schwartz has intuited this point, and is starting to leave the postmodern party. She promises her next work will treat collective identity and the Eucharist. It will be interesting to see how far her investigation enables her to move beyond Freud and towards a recognition that violence is fraternal and that God is fraternal violence's subversion.

I would not recommend *The Curse of Cain* easily: Those who enjoy being scandalized—who enjoy reacting against either "monotheism" or "liberal academic chic"—should not read this book, for it is too easy to do so in a way that panders to their titillation. There are readers, however, who are involved in a serious engagement with the living monotheistic traditions that wrestle to sustain the "difficult" vision of the God who is not the origin of but the solution to violence. And though such readers will find little in *The Curse of Cain* either new or surprising, it is they who will know how to make the book yield a helpful hint or two.

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***Reviewed by* Robert Jeffrey**

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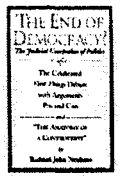

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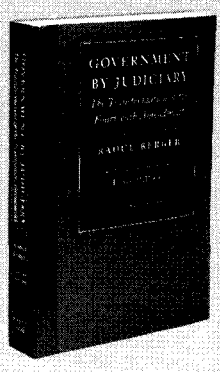

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an, over the events surrounding this conspiracy. John Henry Newman's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, for example, was called forth by Charles Kingsley's review of J. A. Froude's *History of England*, in which Kingsley had mentioned Newman in association with the Plot, accusing Newman of equivocating while an Anglican, a vice associated with Catholics in England ever since the aftermath of the "Powder Treason."

Through a careful appraisal of the surviving primary sources, Fraser aims for judiciousness and on the whole achieves it. She argues that the historical sources cannot support those Catholic partisans who have maintained that the Plot was a complete fabrication from beginning to end on the part of the government to discredit Catholicism. Indeed, she says it is reasonable to expect that some men will act as these men did under such circumstances. Though she calls the plotters "terrorists" and "not good men," her final judgment is that they were "brave, but misguided."

Against Protestant partisans, she argues that Lord Salisbury (Robert Cecil) did use the plot to concoct an extravagant propaganda campaign against the Jesuits, who, Fraser maintains, had consistently counselled against rebellion. She is persuasive in piecing together an account of how Cecil, once informed of the plot, set out to stage the subsequent campaign, including the assault on the doctrine of equivocation, which had been used by some scrupulous Catholics as a way to reconcile their faith and their political allegiance.

IN THE END, Fraser's book is sympathetic to the English Catholics. Her greatest contribution is a compelling and evocative description of the condition of these Catholics under persecution, and how they survived. These "recusants," as they were called, were Catholics who refused to attend Protestant services as required by Parliament's Act of Uniformity ("one religion in one country"), and who paid enormous fines and suffered great indignities as a result. Great careers were foreclosed to the sons of recusant families and advantageous marriages to their daughters. At first, the penalty was merely social ostracism; later, under King James, the prohibitions were codified. Catholics were forbidden to practice law, to serve as officers in the army and navy, to be executors of wills to minors, to receive university degrees, and to vote. Parliament even considered a bill to make all Catholics wear red hats.

Upon his accession, the stated policy of King James was to prevent Catholic principles from having any efficacy within England. Given their minority status this meant wholesale executions were unnecessary, but it did mean policies to pre-

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vent any increase in Catholic numbers. To hinder the education of a new generation of Catholics, great care was taken that recusants should be unable to contract their own marriages and baptisms outside the bonds of the state. Furthermore, Catholics were forbidden to have Catholic servants and schoolmasters, and every master had to have a license to teach from the state. Through the suppression of Catholic education, the ultimate political goal was the annihilation of the Catholic religion.

The laws with the most severe sanctions were those suppressing the Catholic priesthood: forbidding priests to say Mass, and forbidding communicants to attend it. Laymen were subject to jail and heavy fines and priests to execution, and many priests were martyred as a result—by hanging, drawing (heart and bowels cut out, usually with the subject still conscious), and quartering (limbs cut off), preceded by torture with manacles and the rack if necessary. According to the government, these penalties did not amount to religious persecution, but were justified on grounds of treason.

In response to this necessity, English Catholics created a separate, secret world. Some Catholic men contrived to slip between this world and the world of affairs, making their peace with authority for the sake of family or career as a way of surviving (while their wives and children clung to the old Faith in private), only to return to the faith on their deathbed. Others were openly and simply recusant. It was from among this latter group that the great souls emerged, especially from the aristocratic families, and particularly from among the women, to preserve the Faith.

CATHOLICISM LIVED ON in secret hiding places constructed inside the country estates of great Catholic families—churches within homes. Here Mass was said and priests were hidden from the government. Here secret seminaries and schools were maintained. Precisely because women lacked legal standing in common law, the state found it very difficult to impose fines upon recusant women. This peculiarity meant that Catholic women who were in charge of large households had a key role to play. Priests would reside in these households, under cover of servant, tutor, or relative, but the safety of everyone and everything depended on the courage and prudence of these women.

Two of these great souls were sisters-in-law, Eliza and Anne Vaux. Anne Vaux was the protector and manager of affairs for Father Henry Garnet, Superior of the English Jesuits. After Fr. Garnet was martyred in the aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot, Anne Vaux ran a Jesuit School

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for Catholic Gentlemen at her mansion near Derby. Eliza Vaux, who harbored Fr. John Gerard before his escape to the continent, was later convicted for refusing to take the Oath of Allegiance and sentenced to life imprisonment.

Another heroic soul was Nicholas Owen, a lay brother and commoner, an architect, mason, and carpenter who had a gift for the construction of hiding places, some of which are still being found in our day. William Byrd, the great English composer, wrote his masses for three, four, and five voices to be sung in these hidden rooms with space for only a few at Mass. Owen died while being tortured for the second time, never having revealed the whereabouts of any of his "wordless prayers," as his work was subsequently called. He was canonized in 1970.

Fraser also is interested in evaluating the Plot and the plotters in light of universal precepts. According to her, the plotters' justification for violence was necessity in the face of continuous persecution: for "the necessity of Catholics, it needs must be done," Robin Catesby, the central figure in the plot, is reported to have said. In conversation with Fr. Garnet, Catesby reportedly spoke against the Pope's policy of leaving the reconversion of the country to Providence and made the point that "such doctrines of nonresistance took away from Catholics their spirit and energy, leaving them flaccid and poor-spirited." Catesby questioned "whether any authority on earth could take away from them the right given by nature to defend their own lives from the violence of others." Upon going to his death, another of the plotters said that it "was better to die than to live in the midst of so much tyranny."

FRASER WOULD argue that such principles require great prudence in the application. Indeed, her account is generally a cautionary tale for those who expect too much from political reform. The conspirators acted only after having been enraged by King James' political betrayal in wooing Catholics with pledges of toleration as one part of his campaign to succeed Elizabeth and later reneging and even increasing the persecution. The Plot, in fact, was put on foot at about the same time a bill was introduced in Parliament to class all Catholics as "outlaws."

The conspirators badly misjudged the prospects for popular resistance. Most Catholics in England were disinclined to rebellion, even after being deceived by James, and the Spanish had recently sued for a peace of exhaustion. The Vatican's policy had softened as well with the peace policy of the two most recent Popes.

Even those who know very well not to expect salvation from politics, however, also know that it is essential to Christian life to have a government friendly to the Christian family. St. Augustine, in the end, backs away from the idea that there can be a Christian empire, if for no other reason than that all men will never be Christians. But he knows the importance of having a Christian prince. In this thorny area, it is good to have both the wisdom of serpents and the innocence of doves. At the very least, one must be clear-sighted, and this the conspirators were not. As another reviewer pointed out, their conspiracy never had "a ghost of a chance."

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Reviewed by **Patrick G. D. Riley**

WHILE IT isn't customary for a reviewer to begin by quoting someone else on the work under review, Father

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James Schall has described the achievement of his fellow political philosopher Ernest Fortin so succinctly yet comprehensively that the reader shouldn't be deprived of his words at the outset: "In his analysis of rights, Catholic social thought, the state, and general questions of justice, Ernest Fortin has penetrated to the core of the misplaced ideologies and enthusiasms that have appeared in religious circles. In addition, Fortin's essays are a direct challenge to, and redirection of, the major trends in political philosophy in the modern era."

A big part of Father Fortin's achievement has been to track down the dubious philosophical lineage of modern political notions, often unmasking them as the inspiration of various Catholic enthusiasms that have arisen since the Second Vatican Council. He has been especially effective in unearthing the ideologies of draft documents put before the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. But not even papal documents escape his critique. In painstaking analyses of encyclicals from *Rerum Novarum* on, Fortin singles out departures from classic teaching, most notably Leo XIII's treatment of property as a right—itself a modern notion in Fortin's account—rather than merely the most practical and orderly way to share the earth and its fruits, which is the classic, Thomistic rationale for ownership. As a lifetime student of St. Augustine (he is an Augustinian of the Assumption), Fortin knows very well that if speech is to persuade or even not to harm, it must be tailored to the hearer. For that reason among others he does not fault the approach of John Paul II, who until his most recent writings employed a "personalist" approach to nature.

On the disputed question of subjective rights, Fortin has routinely granted in lectures that the classical notion of duty toward others implies their right to its fulfilment. But classical political philosophers passed subjective rights by and dealt in duties, which they linked to the virtues, especially justice. (Recent history demonstrates that it is easier to invent new rights than new duties. Of our new duties, the chief appears to be the obligation to make way for the newfound rights of others, however repugnant or unjust.)

The distinction between rights and duties raises questions far beyond the scope of this review, but it also gives us an occasion to glance at one of the guiding lights of Fortin's thought, Leo Strauss. Strauss was the pioneer proponent in this country of the claim that modern political thought is a radical departure from classical political thought, and that what so deeply divides the two is the modern emphasis on subjective rights and the modern rejection of Strauss's beloved Natural Right, the intrinsically just.

Does this make Strauss a champion of Natural Law? Although he has done much to renew respect for that theory, the brief answer has to be no. To Cicero's treatment of Natural Law Strauss gives shrift so short as to be misleading if not defective. More important, Natural Law in the elaboration of Aquinas, which Strauss considered classic, derives from the Eternal Law in the mind of God, whereas Strauss cast serious doubt on the ability of the human mind to reach the mind of God without the help of Revelation. This is the nub of Strauss' celebrated Athens-Jerusalem dilemma, which he appears to consider irresolvable. It is typical of Strauss' not-infrequent ambivalence that scholars are still debating his views on the matter.

Here Fortin would surely run into trouble were he a mere epigone of Strauss. But to judge by the writings of both men, Fortin is the more thoroughly trained philosopher, and has a firm grip on the philosophical instruments neglected by Strauss in his presentation of Natural Law, such

Patrick G. D. Riley *holds a doctorate in political philosophy from the Angelicum in Rome. He teaches classical civilization at Concordia University of Wisconsin.*

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as analogical knowledge and the universal.

Nonetheless, Fortin is often called a Straussian, and at least two conspicuous features of his work justify the description. One is his emphasis on so-called esoteric writing, the prudent concealment of meaning, which as a student of Catholic writers from the Fathers to Newman he knows has an illustrious pedigree. Another is his exploitation of the moral and political consequences of differences between classical and modern thought. Any philosopher worth his salt is aware of such differences in theories of existence and theories of knowledge, but Fortin has the advantage of recognizing a modern political notion even when it masquerades as classical.

Fortin's conviction that a chasm separates classical and modern political philosophy also enables him to restore politics to its elevated place as the most noble of the practical sciences. No one could call it such in, for instance, the radically pessimistic world of Thomas Hobbes, where political society is an artifact erected by men against the depradations of their fellows. Nor could one associate nobility with the name of Machiavelli, whose rationalized thuggery holds a more honored place in modern political theory than most political theorists would like to grant.

On the other hand, Fortin is no partisan of the purism that he finds in policy statements drafted by the bureaucrats and consultants of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. He cites Cardinal Lustiger to support the impression that the statement of the American bishops on the nuclear threat was written by men who didn't feel threatened. He contrasts the legalism and technical detail of that document with St. Thomas' analysis of morality in warfare, which treats military prudence as a part of political prudence, always understanding that prudence of all kinds is the virtuous application of principles to particulars.

A REVIEWER CAN aspire to convey the flavor of Fortin's thought but hardly the astonishing variety of topics that he tackles, from Patristics to environmentalism, or with what mastery. Nor, except in the reading of it, can the precision and elegance of his prose be savored. Only in dealing with his fellow theologians does his customary restraint break down and scorn break through, as when, granting Peter Hebblethwaite's claim that few theologians want to constitute a magisterium of their own, he counters: "But if, by going over the heads of bishops and taking their case to the general public through press conferences, TV appearances, interviews, widely circulated petitions, and full-page ads in our national dailies, they regularly succeed in undermining the hierarchy's doctrinal authority, the effect is much the same."

What is to be faulted in Fortin? I for one would have appreciated a fuller look at Strauss, who has plenty of critics but few with Fortin's mastery of the necessary philosophical and historical means. Some readers may also be taken aback by Fortin's scholarly minimalism, as when he treats the "Render to Caesar" principle as little more than a clever riposte keeping Jesus one step ahead of his enemies (for the moment). And I still think he does insufficient justice to the apologetical approach taken by Chateaubriand, now in eclipse but in his day, when France was struggling to recover from the political, religious, and intellectual ravages of the French Revolution, perhaps the foremost figure in French letters. By recounting the benefits that Christian belief had bestowed on the world not only in rebuilding civilization but refashioning the materials of its construction, Chateaubriand tried to demonstrate its genius. How much this had to do with the truth of Christian dogma was not clear, as Fortin points out. Chauteaubriand may have read too much into the civil achievements of Christian teaching, but Fortin perhaps gives him less than his due by comparing him unfavorably with the more philosophical and mystical Pascal.

Yet there is a significant parallel

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between Chateaubriand and Fortin. In Fortin's scholarly caution and adamantine Catholicity we can see the Chateaubriand who declared on receiving the last Sacraments: "No man is more skeptical than I. No Christian is more believing."

None Dare Call It Apostasy

The Smoke of Satan: Conservative and Traditionalist Dissent in Contemporary American Conservatism. By Michael W. Cuneo. *Oxford University Press. 214 pp. $27.50.*

***Reviewed by* Joop Koopman**

"The regular Church, with its sterile approach to everything, just wasn't offering me much," says Patricia. Patricia (last name unreported), "an Irish-American woman," is one of a colorful and often positively crazy cast of characters featured in sociologist Michael W. Cuneo's new book on conservative Catholics in the United States. The most extreme of his subjects are conspiracy driven, convinced that the post-conciliar Church—presided over by anti-popes and heretical bishops—has been taken over in a Communist-inspired Judeo-Masonic plot. In their view, a small but faithful remnant has a mandate to keep the faith pure and, in the case of what the author calls the "mystical marianists and apocalypticists," know themselves safe in the face of God's imminent chastisement of sinful humankind, and almost look forward to the end of time.

Cuneo spoke to Patricia while investigating the goings-on in the Bayside Hills section of Queens in New York City, where the self-proclaimed marian visionary Veronica Lueken held court before her death in 1995 and where her most loyal followers—all men, joined in the Lay Order of St. Michael, whose sole "apostolate" is the Lueken legacy—keep things going at the apparently still-booming shrine.

The surfeit of detail in Cuneo's descriptions of characters and movements, a good bit of it not terribly compelling and rather repetitive, threatens to deter all but the most diehard readers. But with Patricia's comment, he has recorded—perhaps unwittingly—something we need to take very seriously: So much of the life of the contemporary Church in America is positively dull, lifeless, and indeed sterile, particularly when it comes to the liturgy and the social dimension of Church life. And if there is anything that motivates the myriad extremist movements that Cuneo chronicles, it is a potentially richer and more solemn liturgical experience—by way of the Tridentine Mass—and a close-knit community life inspired by impassioned, albeit largely misguided, leadership.

That being said, the book gives ample ammunition to critics in the Orthodox community who despair of unity between the Churches of the East and West in large part because of the liturgical muddle in Western Europe and North America. Similarly, Cuneo's painstakingly compiled report once again confirms the lure of some Protestant denominations and local congregations whose warm outreach readily wins over more mainstream but nevertheless disaffected U.S. Catholics. But this is hardly the intended thrust of Cuneo's book.

The author set out instead to record the intimate workings of a number of movements, most dominated by charismatic and highly eccentric leaders. A good number of them assure the perpetuation of their communities by ordaining priests and even bishops, a defiant act most famously associated with the late Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre but practiced freely by a host of leaders in this most bizarre Catholic underground.

Most of the movements have sprung up in the wake of Vatican II, the watershed event for most conservatives. With the Council, a majority insists, authentic Catholicism was

Joop Koopman, *former Editor of the* National Catholic Register, *is a freelance writer based in Connecticut.*

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lost, as the Council Fathers gave away the store. With the landmark document on religious liberty and its spur to ecumenism and interreligious dialogue, the Church surrendered her exclusive claim to truth; and with the introduction of vernacular into the liturgy, the Novus Ordo Mass, and the initial ban on the Tridentine Mass—aggravated by the endless experimentation of the "Litnicks" (liturgical beatnicks), as they were called by Father Gommar de Pauw, founder of the Catholic Traditionalist Movement—the Church's worship life was damaged pretty much beyond repair.

In the most extreme cases, the conciliar Popes—John XXIII, Paul VI, and John Paul II—are believed to be impostors. Those who subscribe to the school of "sedevacantism" believe that the Chair of Peter is actually vacant and even that the "real" Pope is imprisoned somewhere. According to adherents of the Orthodox Roman Catholic Movement, founded by a Father Francis Fention, the real Pope is Cardinal Joseph Siri, who is held captive in a Roman monastery and whose election to the papacy was overturned twice by agents of "a worldwide Judeo-Masonic conspiracy in an effort to dismantle traditional schism."

A related theory was propagated by Francis Shuckardt, founder of the Tridentine Latin Rite Church, a community featuring "a blend of Catholic survivalism, paranoia, and lockstep dogmatism." Because Vatican II contradicted the earlier teaching that "the Catholic Church alone possesses the fullness of truth and the certain means of salvation," Cuneo writes, "the principle of noncontradiction" suggests that the Popes presiding over all the changes are simply schismatic, "and the entire institutional Church is also therefore schismatic."

It gets still wilder. Brother Joseph, a member of the Holy Family Monastery, a community founded by a self-proclaimed Brother Joseph Natale and "one of more than three hundred centers of traditionalist (or separatist) Catholicism" in the country, declares: "The Second Vatican Council was an ingenious plot devised by the Communists to take over the Church, and after the Council was finished, communism infected every aspect of the Church. Communism isn't dead; it's stronger than ever. Satan has overseen the communistic takeover of the Church. The United States is next, and then the entire world!"

In fact, followers of Veronica Lueken routinely claim that one of the Virgin's messages to the mesmerizing New York woman—who is revered as the future "St. Veronica of the Cross" by some, reviled as a fraud or even feared as one endowed with satanic gifts by others—contained a warning about Russian troops being trained in Canada and the U.S., preparing to put in place a "one-world government and one-world religion." It is unwarranted, however, that Cuneo, for the sake of cohesion, it seems, extends this militia mentality to the pro-life clinic-protest movement, which he presents as a sub-category of "conservative and traditionalist dissent."

Pro-lifers such as Father Paul Marx, OSB, founder and director of Human Life International—who battle American Catholics' contraceptive mentality and what they perceive as the relative softness of prominent pro-life organizations, including the bishops' conference—take their place alongside more mainstream conservatives, who are staunchly loyal to the Pope and respect Church authority, despite their misgivings. But the bulk of the book is devoted to separatists and mystical marianists and apocalypticists, some of whose views, as it happened, were given an airing in a recent cover story in *Newsweek* that considered the question whether the Pope, depicted as more or less obsessed with the Virgin Mary himself, will proceed to proclaim the Virgin Mary co-redemptrix.

THE AUTHOR, while maintaining the neutral, dispassionate stance of the objective observer throughout, is clearly most engaged when considering the more extreme fringes of the Catholic world. The effects can be comical or depressing, depending on one's perspective. Thus, Michael E. Jones, renegade editor of *Fidelity* magazine, is convinced, says Cuneo, that "heresy . . . springs directly from the groin; and sexual sin is the root cause of virtually everything that has gone wrong with American Catholicism since the Council. . . . Where there exists theological dissent, the Jonesian formula goes, sexual perversion can't be far out of sniffing distance."

For his part, Father Nicholas Gruner, defender of the secrets of Fatima—and someone frequently taken to task by *Fidelity* for his obsession with alleged marian messages—shows his colors when he tells Cuneo that "Jones is secretly a Jew. He's a Marrano, planted in the American Church to confuse Catholics and sow hatred against people like myself. I think most of us have figured that out by now."

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A comic highlight comes in a description from the late 1970s, the heyday of the Bayside shrine, featuring Veronica Lueken in top form: "In addition to the Virgin Mary, Jesus and St. Michael and several other heavenly beings had also started making frequent appearances to her at the shrine, and the full-time workers were forced to rig up a system of lighting so that pilgrims could keep track of the incoming celestial traffic. A flashing blue light signaled that the Virgin Mary was on the grounds, and a flashing red one signaled the arrival of Jesus."

Michael E. Jones, along with the folks at the *Wanderer* and Catholics United for the Faith, is featured in the book's opening section that deals with conservatives committed to changing the Church from within. With some variations, this group, though convinced that the Church is in a deep crisis, is marked by staunch support for the Pope and overall support for Church authority, despite sometimes overt criticism of individual prelates. In this group, a man of genuine substance, historian James Hitchcock, along with his wife Helen Hull Hitchcock, founder of Women for Faith and Family, has pride of place.

Some readers will be surprised to learn that Dr. Hitchcock started out the 1960s as a Church liberal or that his wife was a Protestant before converting to Catholicism in the mid-1980s. It is too bad Cuneo didn't spend some more time with the Hitchcocks, sacrificing perhaps some space devoted to the lives of a host of eccentric underground Catholics, the details of whose childhood or adult wanderings from fringe group to fringe group are of fleeting interest at best. In the end, the extreme Catholic right depicted here amounts to little that is genuinely viable. In addition, a key figure notably absent from this conservative pantheon is Hitchcock ally Father Joseph Fessio, S.J., and his Ignatius Press mini-publishing empire, mentioned only in passing.

Cuneo's investigation, detailed as it is, suffers from a dated quality. On numerous occasions he prefaces a report by saying that he met or talked to so-and-so "several years ago." It would seem that much has happened in the last couple of years that has heartened conservatives of various stripes, including, for example, the actions of the Bishop of Lincoln, Nebraska.

While Cuneo makes it clear that a huge gulf separates the conservatives (including the pro-lifers, however radical) from the separatists and extreme marianists—and, as noted, stresses that conservatives very much seek to reclaim the Church from within—an overly facile and tidy conclusion throws all of them together under the header of "Catholic fundamentalism," albeit "of three analytically distinct types." He thus implies that the conservatives absolutize the papacy as "their primary source of ultimate authority," just as the others revere to the point of absurdity visions and tradition. This classification hardly does justice to someone like James Hitchcock, who, moreover—unlike the extremists—represents a significant factor in the U.S. Church .

In His Steps

The Moral Vision of the New Testament. By Richard B. Hays. *HarperSanFrancisco. 508 pp. $25.*

Reviewed by **Gilbert Meilaender**

This book is both a reviewer's dream and nightmare. From one perspective it is simple to review. Long as the book is, its contents can easily be outlined, so clear and carefully developed is Hays' fundamental framework. But on the other hand, so many topics are treated in the book—topics on which a reviewer might be tempted to comment—that in frustration one is tempted simply to reprint the table of contents and let it go at that. I will try to summarize the framework without entirely ignoring some of the larger questions that might fruitfully be pursued in conversation with Hays. At the outset, however, it needs to be said that this is an excellent and important book, likely to be widely used and discussed. The book needs to be read as a whole, but it is also a book to which one might return on many occasions to look again at Hays' treatment both of particular

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New Testament writings and of particular moral problems.

On Hays' account we can best use the New Testament for moral reflection by engaging in four distinguishable but overlapping operations—the descriptive, synthetic, hermeneutical, and pragmatic tasks. The first, the descriptive task, is simply the attempt to read the text of the Bible with care. Here Hays emphasizes the need to avoid any "premature harmonizing" of these texts, looking instead for the distinctive emphases of the different New Testament writings. His focus is not on historical developments that may lie behind the texts nor on the texts as a window through which to try to see the social practices of the first Christians. Rather, reading the New Testament as the Church's scripture, he turns to these texts as the norm for the Church's life yet today.

To this end, Hays has chapters discussing most of the major "visions of the moral life" in the New Testament—that of Paul and the Pauline tradition, of each of the four Gospels (combining his discussion of Luke with that of Acts, and his discussion of John with the Johannine epistles), and of the Apocalypse. Although one might raise questions about his decision to discuss these texts in (roughly) historical rather than canonical order (placing Paul before the Gospels, Mark as first of the Gospels, and Acts together with Luke rather than after the Gospels), and although one might quarrel with his treatment of any of these witnesses (as I would, for example, with the emphases in his treatment of Paul), these are wonderfully instructive chapters to which readers may return time and again for clear and accessible discussions.

HAVING FIRST ATTEMPTED to hear the "individual voices" of the New Testament in their particularity, Hays then turns to the task of synthesizing them. After all, if the one God revealed in Jesus of Nazareth speaks to us in these texts, we ought to be able to hear a coherent message in them. How can that be done? Hays suggests, on the one hand, that all these texts in their different ways "retell and comment upon a single fundamental story" of how the God of Israel has acted in Jesus to rescue a lost world, how the Church has been empowered by the Holy Spirit to witness to this good news, and how until the end of history it is to live as a sign of God's redemptive purpose for the world.

Nonetheless, each of the New Testament witnesses emphasizes different aspects of this story; hence, Hays still resists any attempt to produce "a single harmonized telling of the story." (In passing, one wonders whether he really should resist quite so much. If the search for synthesis is, as he emphasizes, an imaginative act "analogous to a director's reading of a Shakespeare play," perhaps a little imagination—of the sort exemplifed in Dorothy Sayers' *The Man Born to be King*—would be useful. If such imagination is not the forte of biblical scholars, as it need not be, there is still much to be learned from artists such as Sayers.)

In any case, having rejected the attempt to tell a single story, how can Hays undertake the task of synthesis? He does it by searching for certain key images shared by all the New Testament witnesses. These images "encapsulate the crucial elements of the narrative and serve to focus our attention on the common ground shared by the various witnesses." The three images he finds most adequate to the task are community, cross, and new creation. Other possible candidates for focal images—the orderly household, freedom from law, love, and liberation—are less adequate, in part it seems, because they are not present in the full range of witnesses. There is something peculiar about such a criterion, inasmuch as it inevitably provides a "lowest common denominator" in focal images, which may not be the same as images that press most deeply to the heart of the story.

The virtue of love is rejected as a focal image not only because it is not a central emphasis in some of the New Testament witnesses but also because it is really no more than an interpretation of an image embodied concretely in the Cross. Perhaps so. But here we may also note one of the more general problems buried in the structure of Hays' discussion. The Cross is the embodiment of Jesus' vocation. The several crosses taken up by his followers in different times and places will not be reenactments of his. We do not simply follow "in his steps"—to use the language of Charles Sheldon's widely read novel. The language of love—precisely because it is more general and pliable than the image of the Cross—may be more suited to serve as an image for many disciples in many ages.

Likewise, the image of "new creation" might better have been brought into connection with the language of covenant fidelity—language that never emerges in Hays' discussion as a serious candidate for focal image status. If the new creation is a restoration of the cre-

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ation—if, in Karl Barth's language, creation is the external basis of covenant and covenant the internal basis of creation—we need moral language that makes more contact with God's work of creation than is accomplished by any of Hays' focal images.

If, through use of Hays' focal images or by any other method, we synthesize the several moral visions in the New Testament, our task is still not completed. The texts whose instruction we have synthesized stand at some remove from our own time and place. The hermeneutical task aims to bridge that divide, to read the New Testament as guidance for the Church today. This involves, for Hays, first paying careful attention to the different "modes" of moral language (rules, principles, paradigms, and symbolic worlds), and then relating the New Testament's moral vision to other possible sources of moral authority (the Church's tradition, reason, and experience). Hays illustrates the interplay of descriptive, synthetic, and hermeneutical tasks through lengthy discussions of five theologians—Reinhold Niebuhr, Karl Barth, John Howard Yoder, Stanley Hauerwas, and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza.

I suspect that the distinction between different modes of moral language may be one of the most difficult sections of the book for readers to pin down. Indeed, I myself doubt that the distinction between rules and principles is a useful one. The most specific of rules will still have to be prudentially applied to cases, and, therefore, they may not ultimately differ from seemingly more general principles. More important, Hays' emphasis upon the way in which the texts shape a symbolic world that provides paradigms for action—the way in which we must seek analogies between New Testament narratives and the life of Christian communities today—may blur more than it ought the distinction between what the Bible narrates or reports and what it teaches. In Hays' hands Jesus becomes in large part a moral exemplar—a move that fails to distinguish Jesus' calling from our own. And the shape of the early Christian communities, as we learn of it from the New Testament, tends to become normative for later generations of believers. "The hermeneutical task is to relocate our contemporary experience on the map of the New Testament's story of Jesus." I do not wish to underrate this approach, on which the influence of Barth is palpable, but I think it would be more successful if Hays were drawing on both Old and New Testaments, not the latter alone.

ONE CAN, of course, hardly fault an author who has written a five-hundred-page book for having confined his attention to the New Testament alone, and, in fact, Hays himself responds to the possible criticism that he has abstracted the New Testament from its larger canonical context. Nevertheless, in that larger context the uniqueness of Jesus' vocation and the difficulties of turning him into a moral exemplar might be more apparent. In that context it might be somewhat more difficult to move from what the New Testament narrates of the earliest Christian communities (as, for example, how they shared their possessions) to moral instruction applicable to all Christians in every time and place. General principles, and general understandings of human nature and the human condition, might be emphasized more as a necessary supplement to symbolic worlds (and one might become more sympathetic than Hays is to the approach of Reinhold Niebuhr). And keeping in mind the entire Bible might make it somewhat more difficult to write a sentence such as the following: "If the Church is to be a Scripture-shaped community, it will find itself reshaped continually into a closer resemblance to the socially marginal status of Matthew's nonviolent countercultural community."

Hays tends for the most part to negate the cultural worlds in which we live—which are, of course, the creation of God, even if corrupted by sin. There is no arguing with that negation, but it must be negation of what is also affirmed—and that note is sometimes missing. Even in terms of the New Testament alone, one might emphasize more than Hays does that Christians live in two aeons simultaneously. For Hays this means only that they are being constantly transformed into the image of Christ, constantly drawn into the new creation, which he seldom thinks of as a restoration of the old.

The pragmatic task yet remains—that is, the need to make judgments about particular moral questions. It means bringing to bear upon some aspect of the moral life all that has been done in the descriptive, synthetic, and hermeneutical operations. To illustrate this last task Hays provides extended discussions of five issues—violence, divorce, homosexuality, anti-Judaism, and abortion. He takes up these questions not because they are necessarily the five most important moral problems

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Christians face, but because they require rather different ways of drawing upon the New Testament.

At least in Hays' mind, the issue of violence is one where the New Testament's witness is clear, pervasive, and univocal; by contrast, the New Testament's texts, while sharing an underlying agreement, show some development of perspective on the matter of divorce; on homosexuality they are clear and of one accord, though few; anti-Judaism illustrates a problem in which the texts seem to stand in fundamental opposition to each other, almost forcing us to choose among them; and abortion is an issue on which the New Testament is silent. Thus, one faces five different ways of trying to use Scripture for moral reflection.

I will not here attempt to trace Hays' full argument on any of these issues. Each of these chapters will repay careful study, and I will limit myself to brief comments on two of them. It is, I think, puzzling that Hays should suggest that the New Testament—indeed, the entire Bible—has no texts about abortion. This is especially puzzling for an author who defends nonviolence—as "integrally related to the heart of the kerygma"—as strongly as does Hays. What can he mean by this? The commandment in the Decalogue he takes as proscribing only murder, not killing. With that we need not quarrel. But if this command does not therefore address abortion (since it does not tell us whether this killing is murder), it also does not directly address my desire to go across the street and strangle my neighbor who is once again playing loud music late at night.

OF COURSE, moral reasoning is necessary to decide whether the Decalogue's prohibition is applicable, but such reasoning is always necessary, not just in the case of abortion. We need only remind Hays of Oliver O'Donovan's point, quoted by Hays himself in his introductory chapter: "Interpreters who think that they can determine the proper ethical application of the Bible solely through more sophisticated exegesis are like people who believe that they can fly if only they flap their arms hard enough." But perhaps Hays means that the Bible does not directly tell us whether a child in the womb is (what we today call) a "person," a human being equal in dignity to the rest of us. True enough. But, of course, it doesn't tell us when anyone becomes a member of the human community or what qualifies one as a member. Once again, moral reasoning is necessary.

Certainly, however, the chapter most important to Hays is that on "Violence in Defense of Justice." It is a long and carefully argued chapter, though not one that I myself find persuasive. The fact that Hays regularly refers to "violence" rather than "force," that he seems unable to make any distinction between them, already suggests that a stronger dose of moral reasoning is needed here. Thorough—and passionate—as Hays' discussion is, the several difficulties noted in passing above all come to focus in this chapter: a failure to treat more extensively the Old Testament (and not just the holy war texts there, but God's constitution of Israel, and other nations, as peoples); a reluctance to think through what it means that Christians should live simultaneously in two ages and that government should be the means God uses to order human life in this time where the ages overlap; a tendency to think of following Jesus as simple imitation of Jesus' own vocation; a tendency to think of what God does in Jesus as only negation of the old creation rather than its renewal and restoration. That "violence" should always be renounced by Christians is true enough. But I cannot find in this chapter persuasive arguments that Christians should always renounce the use of "force" as love's strange way of defending the needs of others.

All fraternal disagreements aside, this is a book that should be highly recommended—not just for scholars but also for general readers. It manages to be both learned and readable. It is marked by deep Christian conviction and commitment to the biblical texts as normative for the Church's life. It can be read with profit from cover to cover, but also, again, in bits and pieces, and it promises to be a very important book for a long time to come.

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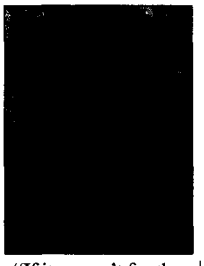

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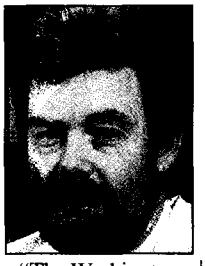

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BRIEFLY NOTED

NEAR UNTO GOD. By ABRAHAM KUYPER. Adapted by JAMES C. SCHAAP. *Eerdmans. 235 pp. $14 paper.*

Recent years have seen a massive upsurge of interest in Christian spirituality—what Richard Mouw calls, in the preface to this book, the "spirituality bust." But it has centered primarily on the Anglican, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic traditions, and this new volume reminds us of the neglected riches of Reformed Calvinist spirituality. Born in 1837, Abraham Kuyper was a major intellectual figure in the Dutch Calvinist tradition for many years before his death in 1929: a theologian, pastor, newspaper editor, and statesman who founded the Free University of Amsterdam and served as Prime Minister of the Netherlands from 1901-1905. What remains little known, however, is the depth of his devotional writings. In making this abridgement of a devotional work by Kuyper first published in the U.S. in 1918, James Schaap, professor of literature at Dordt College in Iowa, has adapted Kuyper's daily meditations by trying "to deliver the essential Kuyper to the ordinary people he respected." These short and pithy meditations serve as a sure and deep guide for what Kuyper called the "hidden walk" and highlight an important dimension of Kuyper's remarkable life and career: the devotional writer who saw all of life as *coram deo*, before the face of God.

— Michael Cromartie

ON BEING CATHOLIC. By THOMAS HOWARD. *Ignatius. 263 pp. $12.95 paper.*

With his customary vivid style, Thomas Howard expounds the faith, doctrine, and piety of the Roman Catholic Church. His understanding of what it means to be Catholic—and catholic—is orthodox and traditional. Readers will find here no ameliorating the effects of sin, no downplaying the cost of daily taking up the Cross. Whether commenting on the liturgy or arguing a point of morality, Howard stresses the biblical foundation, interpreted and expanded by tradition. And when that tradition seems to offer diverging views, Howard is able to present both sides with clarity and sympathy. His sensitive discussion of the varying Protestant and Catholic attitudes toward salvation offers a particularly good example. One question Howard does not take up, however, is the relation of the catholic to the Catholic. He might well have made many of his book's points while an Episcopalian, as he was before converting over a decade ago. Choosing to contrast Roman Catholicism principally with the Protestant tradition in which he was raised, he would have strengthened his argument by also addressing why he found inadequate the Episcopal church in which he spent most of his adult life. Within its chosen range, however, *On Being Catholic* is a truly fine exposition of the faith.

— Michael J. Godderz

HANS HOLBEIN: PORTRAIT OF AN UNKNOWN MAN. By DEREK WILSON. *Phoenix Giant. 308 pp. $22.95 paper.*

This engaging biography seeks to uncover the sympathies and motivations of one of the most enigmatic artists of the Reformation period. Hans Holbein the Younger (1497/8-1543), known today mainly for his portraiture, produced a wide range of works in his earlier years, designing woodcuts supporting Reformation views along with more traditional altarpieces. Despite his close contact with such notable figures as Erasmus and Henry VIII, Holbein is only rarely referred to in contemporary documents, and his ability to adapt to the requirements of his patrons makes his personal attitudes difficult to trace. Wilson claims to have surmounted these difficulties: he elaborates the known facts of Holbein's life into a vivid narrative encompassing the events of the Reformation, and he attempts to reveal the "real man" through a close and imaginative (indeed, often fanciful) interpretation of his paintings. Holbein emerges here as a quintessential Renaissance figure, an observer of the world and seeker of truth whose work embodies Protestant humanism. Since so much of the book depends upon conjecture, it remains doubtful that Wilson has truly found the man behind the art, but he nevertheless presents an informative and highly readable account of both Holbein and the early sixteenth century.

— Jeanne Nuechterlein

THINKING POLITICALLY: A LIBERAL IN THE AGE OF TECHNOLOGY. By RAYMOND ARON. *Transaction. 347 pp. $24.95.*

Born in 1905 and to a large degree ignored, at least in America, by his own progressive generation, Raymond Aron may yet prove to have been the classic French political philosopher of the twentieth century, producing before his death in 1983 such works as *Democracy and Totalitarianism, In Defense of Decadent Europe,* and *The Opium of the Intellectuals.* Comparatively little of Aron's writing, however, is available in English, and this new collection of interviews, *Thinking Politically,* serves as a welcome supplement to his more philosophical works. Though the volume is concerned primarily with the major political events in France during Aron's lifetime, it does describe the intellectual encounters (most notably with Machiavelli, Tocqueville, and Max Weber) and the personal experiences that led Aron to classical liberalism and a belief in democracy as the answer to the totalitarian temptations of communism and fascism. In their introduction, Daniel Mahoney from Assumption College and Brian Anderson from the American Enterprise Institute explain that though Aron did not believe in God, he embodied the Aristotelian philosopher: living a virtuous life, moderating politics, and promoting the common good. The book itself illustrates how Aron succeeded in chron-

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icling with sympathy and wisdom the "mixture of heroism and absurdity, of saints and monsters, of incomparable intellectual progress and persistent blind passions" that constitutes human history.

— *Gregory M. Eirich*

THE HEART OF VIRTUE. By DONALD DEMARCO. *Ignatius. 231 pp. $12.95 paper.*

Despite their occasional presence on best-seller lists, books about virtue remain something of an anomaly in contemporary culture, the impulse for serious personal reflection choked out by the saturation of the entertainment media. Nevertheless, while *The Heart of Virtue* may not be destined for the best-seller list, it is an encouraging sign that we have not altogether abandoned what has been at the core of moral reflection for two millennia. At a time when "Just say no" summarizes the depth of our national moral discourse, DeMarco has the reflective intelligence to argue that—because we do not have the luxury of being steeped in virtuous habits from birth—the virtuous life must be actively pursued. And because vice and virtue are locked in mortal combat, virtue's cultivation must be vigorous. Far from being mere good manners or social affectation, the virtuous life is likened by the author to a garden, in which both weeds and roses grow. Seeking to become virtuous merely by excluding vice is as unrealistic and futile as wishing to cultivate the flower merely by weeding. It is precisely in this way that Thomas Aquinas envisioned the moral life: the life of sin is a fall from coherence to chaos, the life of virtue a climb from the many to the One. The format of *The Heart of Virtue* makes it a delight to read. Selecting twenty-eight attributes to describe the virtuous life, DeMarco presents each in the context of stories. Jean Valjean, the hero of Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables,* teaches us about generosity. Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov from *Crime and Punishment* teaches us about moral transgression and justice. And the novelist Walker Percy's own difficult life teaches us about patience and hope. In addition to the highly illustrative narratives, each chapter of this volume contains philosophical reflections by the author that sharpen and refine the virtues being presented. All told, *The Heart of Virtue* presents like few books on the subject both the extraordinarily rich texture and the heroic quality of the virtuous life.

— *J. Daryl Charles*

LITURGICAL SPIRITUALITY. By PHILIP H. PFATTEICHER. *Trinity. 292 pp. $22 paper.*

The author is understandably nervous about the term "spirituality" in the title and does his best, which is very good indeed, to redeem it from its widespread abuse. Pfatteicher, a Lutheran of very ecumenical sensibility, argues beautifully and persuasively that living liturgically is the fullness of living Christianly. The author intends his work to be in the tradition of Louis Bouyer—a Lutheran turned Roman Catholic—and he has succeeded admirably. Pfatteicher examines, inter alia, eucharistic devotion, daily prayer, church architecture, and the music of worship. The treatment of the Christian year, centered on the Easter vigil, is especially incisive, although one misses a critical examination of changes in the Christian calendar brought about by the multi-year lectionary and, in Roman Catholic usage, "Sundays in ordinary time." Also, while he is no doubt right to set himself against "entertainment worship" and other atrocities of the church-growth phenomenon, his suspicion of anything popular poses problems for evangelization and does not jibe with the enduring popularity through the centuries of the very liturgy that he champions. That aside, *Liturgical Spirituality* is an evocative and informative introduction to a doxological way of being Christian.

A PECULIAR PEOPLE: THE CHURCH AS CULTURE IN A POST-CHRISTIAN SOCIETY. By RODNEY CLAPP. *InterVarsity. 251 pp. $14.99 paper.*

A prolific evangelical Protestant writer, Clapp proposes an understanding of "church as way of life" along lines made familiar by the work of Stanley Hauerwas. The argument is thoughtful and accessible to lay people who are looking for a more countercultural way of being Christian. The approach does leave the reader wondering, however, where to find this "church" that is being celebrated, apart from small groups of the like-minded and like-spirited.

PARTISAN OR NEUTRAL? THE FUTILITY OF PUBLIC POLITICAL THEORY. By MICHAEL J. WHITE. *Rowman & Littlefield. 193 pp. $21.95 paper.*

The author is a professor of philosophy at Arizona State University and offers a persuasive—although, some will say, not convincing—case that political theory must take a back seat to what is necessary for muddling through. He therefore has little use for the Rawls types, is critically appreciative of Neuhaus, and identifies strongly with the "Augustinianism" espoused by Ernest Fortin. A very sensible, if not scintillating, treatment of a subject that is too susceptible to scintillation.

WEAPONS OF THE SPIRIT: SELECTED WRITINGS OF FATHER JOHN HUGO. Edited by DAVID SCOTT and MIKE AQUILINA. *Our Sunday Visitor. 238 pp. $24.95.*

Father John Hugo (1911-1985) was an inspiration for Dorothy Day and served as her spiritual director. An opponent of the ambitions of the modern state, he wrote some of the early, and then very controversial, arguments in support of pacifism, and was a vigorous defender of *Humanae Vitae* and what he believed to be its prophetic understanding of the consequences of separating sexuality from procreation. A wise spiritual voice not to be forgotten.

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THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

A More Real World

The day Mother Teresa died, an editor at *USA Today* asked for an op-ed piece, which I did. In it I quoted her words upon receiving the Nobel Prize for peace (see below). The next day a more senior editor called to say they couldn't use it. "We had in mind," he said, "more on the role of the media and less on abortion." In other words, they didn't want a piece on Mother Teresa.

She was a most improbable celebrity. Less than five feet short and craggy-faced, she was born in, of all places, Albania, and followed God's call to live with and for "the poorest of the poor," the street people of Calcutta. And there she died at age eighty-seven. Not a very promising career path toward becoming one of the best known and most loved people of the century. But, of course, that was not her goal.

In the same week Diana, Princess of Wales, was killed, and inevitably comparisons were made. The media frenzy and orgy of bathos was tasteless in the extreme, but it is fitting that she was mourned. Striking, however, were the commentators, many of them secularist to the bone, who went on about her having been "canonized" as a "saint." It is strange how even the Church's enemies reach for the Church's vocabulary when their words fail them. It was "the week of two saints," according to one news program. Comparisons need not be invidious, but the contrast could hardly be sharper. Diana was killed at age thirty-six in the company of a wealthy playboy who, it was intimated to the press, she intended to marry. Born into British aristocracy, she had married into the royal family, and loaned her publicity to approved causes. And yes, she was beautiful.

The other woman was vowed to a life of poverty, chastity, and obedience; her only beauty was her laughter and her eyes (what laughter! what eyes!); they reflected the joy of doing, as she put it, "something beautiful for God." It is no criticism to note that we probably never would have heard of Diana had she not married Prince Charles. Like some dissident Catholic theologians, she owed her celebrity entirely to the institution that she trashed. At the same time, we should never have heard of Mother Teresa. The whole point, after all, was to hide her life away in the lives of those whom the world is glad enough to forget. The unwanted, the unneeded, the unloved. Mother Teresa's goal, she often said, was not to be successful but to be faithful. But astonishingly successful she was, in a curious way. As wise as a serpent and as innocent as a dove, she employed that success in the service of the truth that she served.

A Fool for Christ

The rumor got out about this little nun in India doing something beautiful for God, and it was spread far and wide, notably by the late Malcolm Muggeridge of BBC. Over the years she would become a spiritual magnet, and today the Missionaries of Charity count more than four thousand sisters and novices, four hundred priests and brothers, and hundreds of thousands of lay volunteers, all serving the poorest of the poor in a hundred countries. The mighty of the world, who pride themselves on their realism, heaped honors upon her, often in lieu of heeding her words. Against the world's realism Mother Teresa did not propose anything so flimsy as idealism. She called us to a different realism, a more real world, a world where life is found when lost in service to others. It is easy to live in a dream world where we fantasize that we are royalty. Much harder, and infinitely more rewarding, is the real world where the royal family is composed of those whom Jesus called "the least of these," and of those who find life in surrendering life to their care.

Mother Teresa became what the apostle Paul called "a fool for Christ," and it is not surprising that some thought her simply a fool. To the powerful and worldly wise who believe an over-populated world is filled with millions of expendable people who never would be missed, she

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was a bothersome naïf who insisted on the dignity of every life, destined from eternity to eternity. She was a rebuke to politicians and ideologues who claim to speak for the poor but are not on speaking terms with poor people. "If you don't know them, you don't love them and don't serve them," she said. She had no grand schemes for ridding the world of poverty, which all too often are schemes for ridding the world of poor people. In defiance of elites who dismiss charity as a "band-aid solution" and demand that charity be replaced by justice, she called her order the Missionaries of Charity, knowing that charity is but another word for love. She knew that justice without love is deadly.

Mother Teresa was not a social worker who happened to be a nun. For her, people were not clients or cases. In those she served she saw the face of Christ—and it did not matter whether they were Christian or Hindu or Buddhist or bereft of any sustaining faith. She believed with them and for them. Her business was not to deliver services but to transform lives. For her, even the most wretched life was transformed by transcendent hope. There is, she insisted, no such thing as a life not worth living. She stood at the entrance gates and the exit gates of life, bearing witness that all is gift, all is grace. In the words of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, "Just to be is a blessing. Just to live is holy."

Some, including some Catholics, derided her as dreadfully old-fashioned. The Missionaries of Charity were pathetically out of step with the progressive directions pioneered by so many religious orders in recent decades. And her "authoritarian" leadership was an embarrassment. Those who confuse the authoritative with the authoritarian were scandalized. Mother Teresa did not deny that she had bowed to authority. It was the authority of the one who said, "Come, follow me"—with all you have, with all you are, all the way. And, like Mary, who is the Mother of us all, she said, "Let it be." And it was. It was for her, and it is for thousands who have followed in her following him. In our time, and in all times, submission is a scandal. Mother Teresa scandalized the world, and she scandalized many in the Church. As was the case with the Lord she followed, she forced the question of whether she was right or whether she was crazy. One way of avoiding the question was to turn her into a celebrity.

It has been said that a celebrity is someone who is well known for being well known, but there is more to it than that. One might say she was an accidental celebrity, but more than accident is involved. In a world captive to wealth and glitter and power, her witness kept alive the rumor that there is a radically different measure of human greatness. And even those whom the world counts great half suspected that she was right. She was greatly honored by those whose measure of greatness she challenged. They were even willing to overlook her violation of their conventional wisdoms. Upon accepting the Nobel Prize for peace in 1979, she declared: "To me the nations with legalized abortion are the poorest nations. The greatest destroyer of peace today is the crime against unborn children."

She said much the same at a big prayer breakfast in Washington with Mr. Clinton and his courtiers in attendance. They listened, or feigned to listen, with faces fixed and, perhaps, teeth gritted. Afterwards, of course, all rose in a standing ovation. "She is a saint, after all, and allowances must be made," some no doubt said to themselves, before turning their attention again to what they call the real world. Mother Teresa agreed with John Paul II that the great contest of history is between the "culture of death" and the "culture of life," and that the culture of life is simply, and demandingly, the way of unconditional love for those whom Jesus called "the least of these." Those who bestowed the honors partly hoped and partly feared that this strange little nun was right.

The unborn, the dying, the radically handicapped, the lepers, those afflicted with AIDS—all those who are shunned by the sleek and strong because they smell of neediness and death—live along the fault lines of society. Mother Teresa understood that a people is judged not by the successful whom we celebrate but by those along the fault lines for whom we care. The message she embodied, and the message of the thousands of sisters all over the world who joined her in the Missionaries of Charity, is disturbingly countercultural. It is disturbing because it demands a response not simply of admiration but of emulation. That's the way it is with saints. Also with the saint whom a cynical world, not quite knowing what to do with the radical innocence of faith, turned into a celebrity.

Christians know better. Or at least we should. And sometime soon—perhaps in the lifetime of some who are reading this—she will be formally beatified, canonized, and raised to the honors of the altar. Little children will ask whether you ever saw her. And you will answer, "Oh yes. That laughter! Those eyes! What joy!" And another generation will listen for the voice that says, "Come, follow me," and will throw away their lives, and thereby find their lives, in doing something beautiful for God.

FT

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GRIDLOCK IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE

The above is from the title of a column in the *New York Post* that has stirred up quite a furor. E. V. Kontorovich of the *Post* editorial board wrote that all kinds of groups are "piggy-backing" on Jewish success in crashing the Christmas party. He calls this "the Menorah Principle." Some years ago, Jews demanded equal space in the public square and got the menorah put up beside the Christmas tree. The very minor feast of Hanukkah was inflated to the size of Christmas, and now fabrication has been added to inflation as some blacks demand equal space for the newly invented festival of Kwanza.

This is getting crazy, says Mr. Kontorovich. In Cherry Hill, New Jersey, a district not notable for its cultural diversity, inclusivity requires a Christmas holiday display crowded with Christmas trees, menorahs, Kwanza kinara candle holders, and gold-laminated pictures of Buddha. Enough already! cries Mr. Kontorovich. In a country where more than 90 percent of the people are Christians, why can't minorities be tolerant enough to let the Christians celebrate their big festival? "Unless society draws a line—and the only obvious place to draw it is at Christianity—an unmanageable tumult will ensue: gridlock in the public square," concluded Mr. Kontorovich. For his troubles, he was attacked with a bombardment of protest in the letters column of the *Post*.

Of course Mr. Kontorovich has a point. In most of the country, a Christmas tree—which is a theologically ambiguous symbol at best—poses no big problem. But where there is an influential Jewish presence, the accompanying menorah has become a tradition by now (traditions being more or less instant in a culture afflicted by presentism). It would cause an awful fuss to remove the menorahs, and where it is tried the courts declare it illegal. One might argue that we should "draw the line" at the tree and the menorah, there being a special connection between Judaism and Christianity (as in the Judeo-Christian tradition) that doesn't obtain with Islam, Buddhism, or, heaven help us, Kwanzaism. But that line would be impossible to sustain, socially or legally. And we really do not want the courts getting into the theology of the singular relationship between Judaism and Christianity.

An alternative to gridlock is that, in the public square and the public school, we might declare it the Religion Season rather than the Christmas Season. But the courts would likely prohibit that as an impermissible "advancement of religion," even if the town atheist got to put up a sign indicating his dissent. The editors at the *Post* note that most of the protest letters came from Jews, and wondered where the Christians are on this. The answer is that many Christians feel very uneasy about being a majority. Call it the virtue of humility, guilt over their real and alleged oppression of minorities in the past, or just loss of nerve. Our more liberal churches are not at all sure that Christianity should be "privileged." Not even in church, and certainly not in the public square. More orthodox Christians, too, are easily intimidated by the charge of "triumphalism."

A Minority Is a Minority

So what is to be done? Where it does not raise community hackles, a Christmas tree or, much better, a crèche is a very nice thing. And if the Jews in the community really want a menorah there, why not? For Jews it is a sign that they really belong, while for Christians it speaks of Christ as the fulfillment of Old Testament promise. Plus, it shows that Christians are very nice to Jews. But it becomes a different matter when what Kontorovich calls "the 2 percent religions" (and 1 percent and near zero percent) all want to get in on the act. The Cherry Hill solution is simply silly. Moreover, there is no more sure way to trivialize religion than to suggest that the crèche, the menorah, a Kwanza candle, and a laminated Buddha are all "equally meaningful" symbols of whatever.

E. V. Kontorovich is right. The "Menorah Principle" was wrongheaded from the start. Here in New York it was pressed by the very Orthodox, such as the Lubavitcher hasidim. There is painful irony in a reach for symbolic "equality" that involves distorting Jewish tradition in order to produce a simulacrum of Christmas. Jews were and still are divided on the wisdom of the Menorah Principle. Jews can withdraw from their public entanglement with Christmas, but there is no agreement on doing that. Christians cannot ask them to withdraw without sparking an enormous public row.

Were it not for the judiciary's mindless pronouncements on the "establishment" of religion, it would have been possible for the overwhelming majority of citizens to publicly celebrate one of their really important festivals. In fact, it happened quite naturally until the Supreme Court, beginning in 1947, took its "strict separationist" turn of hostility to religion. Before that, Jews more or less gladly left Christmas to the Christians, recognizing that a minority of 2 percent is, well, in the minority. The Court's hostility to religion (especially the religion of the majority) made common cause with the Lubavitchers' zeal for religion, producing the Menorah Principle, about which not much is to be done. Except perhaps to let it run its course and destroy itself in the Cherry Hill Implosion. Or, at the risk of sounding utopian, the courts might come to their senses.

Meanwhile, it is worth remembering that, while

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the public school is a government school, the public square is not coterminous with government square. Government schools are on the defensive and may over time give way to schools of parental choice, as more people realize that, when it comes to what is most important in education, government makes a complete hash of things. The public square, however, includes many spaces that are not governmental. It involves malls, which in many places are the closest thing to a town square. And it involves church properties and the front lawns of homes, where citizens can be as exuberant as zoning laws allow in celebrating Christmas as a Christian thing.

Where that can still be done in government space as well, let it be done. But it cannot be done where the Menorah Principle is entrenched, and it seems it will soon be entrenched everywhere. Certainly, Christians should not be complicit in the public trivialization of Christmas. And I expect there will be a return to sanity some day when enough Jews decide that a muddled exhibition of menorah, Kwanza candle, Islamic star and crescent, Buddha, and Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer is not really the statement they wanted to make about the place of Judaism in American public life. When that happens, Christians, Jews, and everybody else will be permitted to go back to celebrating their holidays as holy days.

FT

Here I Stand. And Here, and Here: The ELCA in Assembly

A delegate to the recent assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) said he was reminded of the Yiddish description of a trimmer who wants to be loved by all, "Er tantsan af tszey khasenes"—he dances at every wedding. This was not simply a matter of dancing, however, but of accepting marriage proposals. The assembly had before it action on several proposals: a joint Lutheran-Roman Catholic statement declaring that differences on justification by faith are not church-dividing; a *Formula of Agreement* with Reformed churches, including a doubtfully Reformed body, the United Church of Christ; and a *Concordat of Agreement* with the Episcopal Church. The justification statement was hardly a marriage proposal. It simply said that what Lutherans had historically claimed was the chief obstacle to reunion with Rome is no longer an obstacle. There was no indication, however, that that brings wedding plans any nearer, although Catholics may wonder why not. The Episcopal *Concordat* was a proposal, and it was declined by a very narrow margin, with promises that it would be accepted the next time around. So the ELCA ended up with only one wedding for now.

"If the Lutheran and Reformed churches can bridge historic differences between Luther and Calvin, other denominations would do well to take a close look at what we're doing," said H. George Anderson, bishop of the ELCA. One may wonder whether differences were bridged or simply obscured and ignored. Among oldline churches, Lutherans had an enviable reputation for being theologically serious, but that may be a thing of the past. Putting it with perhaps excusable indelicacy following his church's recent general convention, an Episcopal priest observed, "This church suffers from a theological disease that might be called Anglican Integrity Deficiency Syndrome, and until it is cured we should not be practicing unprotected ecumenism." Much the same might be said of all the oldline liberal churches, which means that nobody is in danger of being more infected than they already are. But we should not too readily accept such a jaundiced view.

Lutheran theological integrity centered on justification by faith. This, it was declared, is the article of doctrine "by which the Church stands or falls." Justification, it was said, is the reason why Lutheranism, which started out to be a reforming movement within the Catholic Church, had to become a separated communion. If this is the case, it would seem that the adoption of the Lutheran-RC statement on justification would have momentous consequences. But it seems that was not and is not the case.

Outside the theological fraternity, it is doubtful that the radical teaching of justification by faith alone, as understood by Martin Luther, has been distinctively formative of popular Lutheran piety. Surveys done over the years suggest that Lutherans, pretty much like most other Christians, expect that God will be nice to them at the judgment because, all in all, they are pretty nice people.

W. H. Auden caught this in his 1940 poem, "Luther." He spoke of Luther's "conscience cocked to listen for the thunder. . . . The fuse of Judgment spluttered in his head. . . . All Works, Great Men, Societies are bad. The Just shall live by Faith . . . he cried in dread." Then Auden's conclusion: "And men and women of the world were glad, / Who'd never cared or trembled in their lives."

I write with great ambivalence about the ELCA. It is the body to which I once belonged, and it is no mere commonplace when I say that there remain some of my dearest friends. Most of them call

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themselves "evangelical catholics," and they subscribe to an understanding of Lutheranism that was in this century most influentially advanced by Prof. Arthur Carl Piepkorn (1907-1973) of Concordia Seminary, St Louis, my alma mater. We affectionately called him the Pieps. He believed that Lutheranism is a "corrective," temporarily separated from Rome until Rome no longer rejected the message of justification by grace through faith.

A friend, a former Lutheran who also became a Roman Catholic, wrote after the ELCA assembly: "As much as I hate to admit it, the hopes and expectations that we received from the Pieps have turned out to be illusory. Lutheranism is not, and does not wish to be, part of the Catholic Church, and as skillful as we may have been in meeting the arguments of our critics, in the end they had a firmer grasp on Lutheran identity. . . . The one thing that is certain that we got from the Pieps is that neither you nor I ever wanted to be Protestant. As you once said, I do not want to be part of a 'corrective' but part, quite simply, of the Church. It is hardly surprising that I have not looked back since becoming Catholic. What I have learned is that there is no way to be Catholic without being part of the Catholic Church. Protestantism is something different altogether."

Such sentiments understandably raise hackles. After all, there are the lower-case catholics of the Anglo-Catholicism launched in the nineteenth century, and distinguished figures such as Philip Schaff (1819-1893) and John Nevin (1803-1886) of the "Mercersburg Theology," and of course the self-identified evangelical catholics in several Protestant denominations today. Evangelical catholicity has a noble pedigree. Many of its adherents, like John Henry Newman, finally decided that they had been holding on to "a paper church" and entered into full communion with Rome. Yet others soldier on where they believe God has put them.

Then too, there are numerous others for whom being unabashedly Protestant is no problem. Here we encounter a deep difference between ecclesial and nonecclesial ways of being Christian. In the nonecclesial—or perhaps we should say less ecclesial—mode, the chief thing, finally the only thing, is one's personal relationship to Christ. To the extent the Church is important, it is important to sustain that relationship and provide ways of cooperating with other Christians, and for that the local church will do. For the ecclesial Christian, Christ the head and his body the Church are inseparable; faith in Christ and faith in the Church is one act of faith; the imperative of fidelity is to be in closest communion with the Church most fully and rightly ordered through time.

Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy represent ecclesial Christianity. The Protestant denominations include ecclesial Christians who are engaged in a running argument that their churches are or should be catholic, even upper-case Catholic. Among the most thoughtful of evangelical catholics in the ELCA is Pastor Leonard Klein of Christ Church, York, Pennsylvania, and I will here steal shamelessly from his account of the assembly in *Forum Letter*.

Although early on there were those who agitated for Lutheranism to accommodate itself to the general Protestantism that German and Scandinavian immigrants found in America, the Lutheranism that prevailed here was mainly "confessional," meaning that it adhered to the sixteenth-century confessions contained in the *Book of Concord*. That Lutheranism presented a forthright theological position, more or less confidently asserting, "We believe, teach, and confess that . . ." That confessional tradition is not dead, says Pr. Klein, but is succumbing to "the current form of classical liberalism." By that he means the "experiential-expressivist" position described by Yale's George Lindbeck (another evangelical catholic among Lutherans) in his influential book *The Nature of Doctrine*. In this liberalism, individual sensitivity, choice, and experience occupy the throne. As Klein puts it, "The sharpest lines are drawn against the drawing of lines, and thus in times of decision liberalism trumps the remaining confessionalism."

The refusal to draw lines was reflected in the assembly's adoption of a sacramental practices statement that permits the use of both wine and grape juice in the Eucharist, communing infants and not communing infants, and in the continuation of the policy whereby the ELCA pays for abortions obtained by its employees. It is, of course, a matter of choice and nothing is imposed on anybody, except of course that all must pay into the central account that funds abortions. Everything must be done to avoid controversy. As Pastor Richard Koenig wrote of the assembly in the *Christian Century*, "This is a church that wants *above all else* to stay together." (Emphasis added.) That controlling imperative explains the response to the three ecumenical proposals, Roman Catholic, Reformed, and Episcopalian.

In the larger world of ecumenical affairs, there has been much talk in recent years about "reconciled diversity." The idea is that differences once thought to be church-dividing may not be so, that unity does not mean uniformity, and so forth. "What we have achieved with the Reformed," writes Pr. Klein, "true to the mood of the inclusive church, is unreconciled diversity."

The narrowly rejected *Concordat of Agreement* with the Episcopalians was rejected because it contained a hint that something may be imposed. However gingerly, and however slowly, Lutheran ministries would have been brought into "apostolic succession." The fear of "hierarchy," and the suggestion that there might be something not entirely in order about Lutheran ministries as they

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presently are, turned out to be intolerable. On the other hand, the *Joint Declaration* on justification with the Catholics sailed through almost unanimously. It demanded nothing. In fact, as Klein notes, it perfectly suited the animus against drawing lines since it was thought that "the old lines on the doctrine of justification were too sharp and polemical."

In his insightful book *No Offense,* sociologist John Murray Cuddihy wrote of the terminal "niceness" of American Protestantism. Being nice enables us to stay together, and staying together is what is wanted *above all else.* The old position that Catholics and Lutherans fundamentally disagree on justification was not nice. Agreeing that justification is no longer church-dividing was the nice thing to do. I hasten to add that the *Joint Declaration* is a superb piece of theological work and it should have been approved. This analysis deals with why it was approved.

A little under 20 percent of the delegates opposed the *Formula of Agreement* with the Reformed, and it is likely that they were disproportionately clergy and others who were more familiar with the historic differences between Lutherans and Calvinists. "It was a dire decision," writes Klein. "The ELCA opted for pluralistic denominationalism over confessionalism. For thirty years the dialogue [with the Reformed] submerged fundamental disagreements in eucharistic faith and practice. People who had to know better trivialized differences in hearings and on the floor, and the assembly cheerfully went along."

The proponents of fellowship with the Reformed repeatedly cited Calvin over the more radical Zwingli. Yet Calvin consistently stopped short of saying what Lutherans insisted upon, namely, that the bread and wine in the Eucharist is truly the Body and Blood of Christ. Writes Klein, "Our confessional assertion [of the Real Presence] puts us on the Catholic side of the great divide, and we just stepped over it as if it were not there. . . . Liberalism won, not ecumenism. The latter seeks genuine agreement in the truth of the Gospel; the former just wants everyone to get along."

As for the Episcopalians, two years from now the next assembly may accept an amended *Concordat.* This time around there was almost the two-thirds needed for approval. "Lutherans will find a way to move slowly into the historic episcopate," says Klein, "but long before they arrive at the fullness of that goal unreconciled diversity and flat-out liberalism will have done their work, and any genuine Lutheran confessionalism, to say nothing of a truly catholic vision of Lutheranism, will have faded." For some Lutherans, the Episcopal link was supposed to provide a reinforcement for the catholic and orthodox side of Lutheran identity, and perhaps even nudge Lutheranism toward ecclesial reconciliation with Rome, but that supposition seems less than credible in view of the doctrinal and moral disarray of the Episcopal Church.

Klein writes: "The autonomous religious self needs a big tent because it has *gnosis.* The moral issues slip first, then 'core doctrine' and confessions become reference points, not authorities. The autonomous self does not need them. Experience liberates, so there is no authority beyond the self and the collective of selves gathered to vote on 'the mind of the church.' But such an assembly cannot teach with clarity, let alone authority. Scripture and confessions are not repudiated (though tradition is) and their authority is nickeled and dimed away. Actually, it's not nickels and dimes but whole fortunes that Lutheranism has lost in a very short period of time."

Are Pr. Klein and other evangelical catholics bitter? There is no doubt an element of that. But bitterly disappointed, too, are conservative confessionalists of a strongly Protestant bent who see their church captive to "experiential-expressive" liberalism. A theological argument, an argument about the truth of things, is no longer possible. Now they are in full altar and pulpit fellowship, as the Lutherans put it, with the United Church of Christ, which is insouciant about the denial of baptismal regeneration, the Real Presence in the Eucharist, and is apparently undisturbed by clergy who publicly question the divinity of Christ. That the UCC is proud of its distinction as the only denomination—aside from the small gay-based Metropolitan Community Church—that officially ordains openly gay men and women is but a predictable part of a laissez-faire Christianity where no lines can be drawn. That the ELCA has now definitively foreclosed the possibility of unity with more conservative Lutherans, such as the large Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, is apparently a matter unworthy of consideration.

It seems like many years ago when over lunch I told Norman Podhoretz, former editor of *Commentary,* that I was becoming a Catholic. His immediate response was, "But what about Bach?" I do miss Bach and much else in the musical heritage of Lutheranism. But Lutheranism was more than that. At its best, it was, in a world set upon the trivialization of truth, a community that dared to say, "We believe, teach, and confess." There are and will continue to be enclaves of confessional seriousness and catholic sensibility within the ELCA. And the ELCA as a body is able and will continue to be able to proclaim truths that are central to the Gospel. But not, apparently, when truths are contested, when lines must be drawn, when it becomes necessary to say we believe, teach, and confess *this*—and not *that.* The inclusiveness of unreconciled diversity is a relentless mistress. When holding an institution together is valued *above all else,* it becomes doubtful what else remains.

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The somber assessment offered by Pr. Klein and others forces hard decisions for many in the ELCA. But the disappearance of the Lutheranism that was affects other Christians as well, not least Roman Catholics. As the ELCA vanishes into the potpourri of liberal Protestantism and the Missouri Synod is increasingly hardened in its separation from everyone else, the theological Lutheranism that was both the exasperation and envy of others will be missed. At least it should be missed by those who understand that Christianity is, above all else, a matter of truth.

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THE STATE OF CONSERVATISM

Frankly, it is not the kind of meeting where I am entirely comfortable. In fact, I was uncomfortable. The First International Conservative Congress was held at the Mayflower in Washington, D.C., at the end of September, pulled together chiefly by *National Review* and the American Enterprise Institute, and starring Lady Thatcher, the former British prime minister, and what seemed like a cast of thousands. So what is a priest doing at an undeniably partisan conference? A good question.

Of course many clergy are uninhibited in cheering on the liberal cause. I did it myself in the 1960s, and was much applauded for supplying what was called "a chaplaincy to the secular city" (remember Harvey Cox's *The Secular City*?). I was a delegate to the 1968 and 1972 Democratic National Conventions, and in 1970, in one of the dumbest moves of my life, even ran for Congress from Brooklyn. That should have cured me of partisan politics, and almost did. Half way through the campaign, which was a very near run thing, I knew I had made a big mistake in thinking I could be a pastor (Lutheran at the time) and a politician at the same time. I have said it before and some dismiss it as sour grapes, but the truth is I have thanked God many times over that I lost that race. I accepted the nomination for the 1972 convention because friends insisted it was the only way to avoid a divisive fight among community groups with which we were working on a host of issues important to Brooklyn. But I was distinctly uncomfortable in Miami, and resolved to steer clear of such things in the future.

Nonetheless, the organizers of the September 27-28 meeting in Washington invited me to speak on the judicial usurpation of politics and I accepted, hanging around to see what others were saying. It was an interesting couple of days, and I thought you might not be bored by a few notes on what happened. The theme was set at the opening session, "Why Conservatism Is Failing." This reflected the worry of Brits and Europeans that leftist parties are in the ascendancy in Britain, France, and, apparently, Germany. The overwhelming majority of participants, however, were Americans, and few of them were buying into the theme. Most of them seemed to think conservatism is on something of a roll.

Rhetoric and Reality

A point made repeatedly was that leftists, whether in Europe or here with Clinton and the "New Democrats," had largely adopted the rhetoric—and in some cases the policies—favored by conservatism. This, it was said, should be chalked up as a victory, albeit an ambiguous victory, for conservatives. One British MP strongly dissented, noting that if he played for the Chicago Bulls and all the other teams beat the Bulls by adopting their tactics, it would be silly to call this a victory for "Chicago Bullism." A nice point nicely made, but he had few takers.

The columnist Charles Krauthammer, a dear friend, made the case for a conservative roll in his typically elegant manner. While he was by no means Pollyanish, he noted the California vote on affirmative action, the congressional elimination of welfare entitlement, and other major changes. Along the way he took a friendly crack at this journal and its editor in chief, contending that we are alarmist about judicial usurpation. His argument was that, on assisted suicide and other issues, the Supreme Court is clearly retreating from judicial activism.

At the session dealing with that subject, I took it upon myself to explain why Charles is wrong. In the suicide decision a majority of Justices could not have been more explicit in saying that the Court and the Court alone will make the final decision on the question, although it was not ready to do so now. In the *Boerne* decision overturning the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, the Court told Congress in no uncertain terms that the Court will tolerate no infringement of its claimed monopoly on constitutional interpretation. And so forth. Of course I think our side won the judicial usurpation argument (Lino Graglia of the University of Texas law school was particularly effective), but I am glad to note that a lot of other people thought that too. (The indomitable Harry Jaffa of Claremont was also part of that discussion, once again making his argument that the Declaration of Independence is an organic part of the Constitution, and apparently less worried about judicial usurpation than about judges who don't judge by the principles of natural law.)

In other sessions, Kate O'Beirne of *National Review* blistered the Republican congressional majority for being spineless wimps without a

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purpose. Intimidated by liberals in general and feminists in particular, "in their hearts they know they're wrong." Ralph Reed, former head of the Christian Coalition, was thinking positively. "It is not that conservatism is cracking up; it's growing up." He takes heart from congressional action on partial-birth abortion, notes that there is in the House a majority large enough to pass a pro-life amendment, and is hopeful about "rolling back the excesses of the abortion regime." ("Excesses" is a curious word in that connection.) Congressman Jim Talent was similarly upbeat. That the left steals the right's rhetoric is no little thing, he declared. Rhetoric is important. "Get a politician to say something in public three times, and he is personally convinced it is true." In a rhetorical theft from the Marxists, he effectively argued that "the correlation of forces" is moving in a conservative direction.

A surprise for me, and for many others, was a very impressive presentation by Steve Forbes, who is clearly running for the presidential nomination. In both delivery and substance, this was light years away from the Forbes perceived as a millionaire accountant mumbling along on the single theme of the flat tax. Not that he has given up on that issue, but he offered a most effective *tour d'horizon* on everything from foreign policy to the global influence of American popular culture to the ways in which wars are the catalyst for big government.

Most impressively, however, he addressed the moral state of the culture, with specific reference to abortion and the other life questions. Pro-life politicians typically declare that they are pro-life and assume that is enough, becoming stumbling and tongue-tied in explaining why they are pro-life. By way of contrast, Forbes made a convincing case for why law must be on the side of the weak, and spoke thoughtfully on the necessary interaction of law and culture in achieving the protection of unborn children and others who are vulnerable. Were this not a rigorously nonpartisan journal, I would suggest that Republicans who are looking for a presidential candidate who is ready and able to articulate the most important arguments in the public square should take a very close look at Steve Forbes.

Quotas By Any Other Name

Among the most fascinating sessions was the one that paired Glenn Loury and Ward Connerly on the question of affirmative action. Loury of Boston University is no stranger to these pages, and Connerly is, of course, the hero of California's Proposition 209 that outlawed quotas. What came through compellingly is that here are two superlatively articulate black men, both deeply devoted to racial reconciliation and sharply disagreeing on how that is to be achieved. Of course, this crowd was overwhelmingly on Connerly's side. Everybody acknowledged that Loury showed a great deal of courage in even attempting to make to this audience his argument for modified affirmative action. He noted that many black activists call him a tool of reactionaries, while conservatives view him as unreliable. "I have been marginalized in the middle," he wryly observed.

Connerly's case is nothing if not clear-cut. Both morally and constitutionally, discrimination on the basis of race is wrong. Period. The best thing for the black underclass and everybody else is to go cold turkey, terminating every program that discriminates in any way on the basis of race, gender, or anything other than merit. Loury, on the other hand, is strongly critical of existing affirmative action programs, but believes there is a legitimate and necessary place for very limited policies that take race into account. Affirmative action, he insists, should be limited to blacks, which was the sole intention of the original Civil Rights Act. A university can and should take race into consideration, just as it legitimately considers geography in admitting students, or whether parents are alumni, or the student's athletic skills. How can I teach my students that all blacks and all whites do not think the same way, Loury asks, if I don't have blacks in my class? Must not an urban police department make sure that there are enough blacks on the force to effectively police black areas? And so forth.

Connerly would not give an inch. Discrimination is immoral in principle and therefore must be prohibited. In support of his very modest version of affirmative action, Loury was urging the principle of prudence, a great virtue in public policy. The discussion that followed was, to say the least, lively, with Norman Podhoretz, former editor of *Commentary*, making the telling point that Loury's modest proposal is precisely what affirmative action started out to be in the sixties. At the time of the bill's passage, Hubert Humphrey famously said that, if it was ever used to impose quotas, he would eat the paper on which the bill was written. The argument made by Podhoretz and others is that, once we allow even the most modest version of affirmative action, it will, by its own logic and backed by the coercive force of government bureaucracy, turn into the monstrosity that it is today.

On points, I think it must be admitted that the Connerly side won the debate. And yet. There are surely times when we can and should discriminate. Political parties have from time immemorial come up with "balanced tickets" to appeal to ethnic and racial groups. A police department trying to infiltrate a black criminal gang will certainly choose a black officer for the job. But these limited instances are a far way from affirmative action programs in which government discriminates in favor of some—and therefore, necessarily, discriminates against

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others—in the distribution of opportunities that rightly belong to all.

Loury's deeper concern, and it seems to me entirely right, is that much of the attack on affirmative action is driven by people who simply want to forget about the plight of the black underclass. A week before the Washington meeting, we had Judge Clarence Thomas give our annual Erasmus Lecture. His opposition to quotas is well established, but in his lecture he gently but pointedly noted that many who today are so enthusiastic about color blindness are the same people who some years ago—and not all that long ago—could see nothing but color. In the attack on affirmative action, he suggested, there is a disagreeable odor of "hypocrisy in the air."

Both Loury and Thomas, I believe, are on to something very important. The problems of black-white relations, what Gunnar Myrdal a half century ago appropriately called "the American dilemma," are by no means resolved. Working toward racial reconciliation and justice for all is primarily the task of civil society, and not least of all the churches. Perhaps, in ways not yet tried or even imagined, the government also has a role. But I believe the returns are in: affirmative action, with its inevitable quotas, is not the way to go. It was a policy well-intended but misconceived; it has resulted in massive and grave injustices to those who are not preferred; it demoralizes, degrades, and casts a shadow of suspicion on those who are preferred; it exacerbates the very tensions it was supposed to assuage; it should be entirely dismantled, the sooner the better.

Much else of interest happened at the Mayflower, and I really wasn't all that uncomfortable. In fact, I rather enjoyed the gathering of the clan. I don't know how, but it has somehow happened over the years that most of my friends turn out to be conservatives. Not that I wouldn't accept an invitation to speak at a meeting called by Common Cause or the ACLU. We are, after all, tenaciously nonpartisan.

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WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ Here is a different take on the much discussed question of "same-sex marriage." Julie Loesch Wiley writes: "Some Christians say that gay 'marriage' is impossible, but I would strongly disagree. I would say that gay marriage is so typical for everybody in this society—no matter what their sexual orientation—that it takes a heroic effort for any couple to enter into anything but a 'gay marriage.'" Her point is that what many people mean by marriage today is something that homosexuals can undertake as well as anyone else. Ms. Wiley writes, "If you say that marriage need not be sexually exclusive, nor irrevocable, nor devoted to child rearing, nor a sacred sign of anything beyond the participants' mutual self-interest—then you have taken away all its essential parts but, obscurely, retained the same label." The conclusion: "From a Christian point of view it is, of course, impossible for two men or for two women to join each other in holy matrimony. But from a secular, civil point of view, it does make a kind of weird sense that gays would want in on gay marriage. Because from a secular, civil point of view, that's the only kind of marriage there is."

■ The problem with Pat Robertson's rhetoric is that it isn't right enough. At least that's the view of Pamela Robles, writing in *Focus*, a magazine of Robertson's own Regent University. Robertson's public statements, she says, fit the genre of Puritan jeremiads calling a Christian nation to repentance. This leads to all kinds of unhappy misunderstandings. "To put it bluntly," says Robles, "if the religious right does not want a theocracy in the United States, then its speakers should adopt a rhetorical strategy that does not continue to give people the impression that they do." "The Puritan jeremiad has led to much confusion," she writes. "Perhaps now it should be replaced or at least supplemented with rhetorical approaches that reassure today's diverse audience that the religious right wants to include them in, rather than exclude them from, the community of Americans. Finally, it's clear that politically active Christians must struggle to maintain a delicate balance between two difficult and very different duties. They must try to uphold, with their left hand, convictions about what they believe are immutable moral laws while, with their right hand, they must continue to demonstrate the love of God to those who don't yet believe in Him. The religious right might be able to correct some of the popular misconceptions about its goals by leaning its future rhetoric more towards the right."

■ The Danish-born embryologist, Steen Malte Willadsen, is a maverick (some might say mad) scientist who sells his talents to private companies with big-buck dreams of cloning whatever is salable. According to some reports, he was ahead of Ian Wilmut, the fellow who cloned Dolly the sheep, but he didn't publicize his activities. He is now doing "interesting" things with human embryos, and says he expects human beings will be cloned, but those who do it will likely try to avoid controversy by using some other term. "It probably will not be called cloning," Willadsen said. Summing up his own philosophy, he declared, "The role of

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experimental science is to break the so-called laws of nature." That puts it succinctly.

■ Most all of us who are, however confusedly, connected with the phenomenon called neoconservatism were greatly influenced by Daniel Bell's *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, first published in 1976. It was and is an impressive book, convincingly making the case that capitalism is not a system that can run of itself but requires cultural and political supports that seemed (and seem) to be collapsing. Echoing T. S. Eliot's self-description, Bell said that he was "a socialist in economics, a liberal in politics, and a conservative in culture." I had earlier posited the formula that I am orthodox in religion, conservative in culture, liberal in politics, and pragmatic in economics. What has changed drastically in the last quarter century is the definition of liberal politics. In any event, *Cultural Contradictions* has recently been reprinted with some updated reflections by Bell. Not very updated, unfortunately. Bell had always distanced himself from neoconservatism, and he now says that he continues to be a socialist, but he seems to be at a loss to explain what that means. He writes, "What is left and what is right and what is liberal and what is conservative have all become jumbled." The fault, he concludes, lies with politicians themselves. "Especially when looking at public opinion polls, they claim to be responsive to the volatile expressions of voters." Reviewing the book in the *Times Literary Supplement*, Marc Carnegie observes, "Thus everyone is to blame—the shady politicians and the all too unreliable humans who employ them." Carnegie continues: "In the end Bell has a go at tying up loose ends with a half-hearted pitch for religion—'not the sphere of God or the gods,' but rather 'the sense, a necessary one, of the sacred, of what is beyond us and cannot be transgressed'—but this, too, fails to convince. He might have recognized that socialists who seek refuge in religion may be the greatest cultural contradiction of all."

■ Two articles, side by side, in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* indicate a little light shining through the cracks of multicultural darkness. Kay Haugaard teaches creative writing at Pasadena City College and says she has for more than twenty years been teaching Shirley Jackson's short story, "The Lottery," in which the citizens of a small town ritually stone one of their number to death. Jackson's story used to shock people into moral judgment, but no longer, according to Ms. Haugaard. After a lengthy discussion, it became apparent that her students thought they were in no position to judge people who followed different traditions. "At this point I gave up. No one in the whole class of more than twenty ostensibly intelligent individuals would go out on a limb and take a stand against human sacrifice." The second article is by Robert L. Simon, professor of philosophy at Hamilton College. It is titled "The Paralysis of 'Absolutophobia.'" Whatever else students may dare to do, they will not risk being thought of as moral absolutists. "Although groups denying the reality of the Holocaust have raised controversies on some college campuses, in more than twenty years of teaching college students, I have yet to meet even one student who has expressed doubts about whether the Holocaust actually happened. However, I have recently seen an increasing number of students who, although well-meaning, hold almost as troubling a view. They accept the reality of the Holocaust, but they believe themselves unable morally to condemn it, or indeed to make any moral judgments whatsoever. Such students typically comment that they themselves deplore the Holocaust and other great evils, but then they wind up by suspending moral judgment." Mr. Simon doesn't think that his students are, deep down, complete moral relativists or skeptics, but something has happened, and it is frightening. "By denying themselves the moral authority to condemn such great evils of human history as the Holocaust, slavery, and racial oppression, these students lose the basis for morally condemning wrongdoing anywhere, and so must ultimately abandon the very values that led them to advocate tolerance and respect for diversity in the first place. Isn't it our responsibility as teachers to show, by directly confronting the confusions underlying absolutophobia, that students need not be inflexible dogmatists in order to have a moral ground on which to stand? If we allow the legitimate desire to avoid moral fanaticism to drive us to the point where even condemnation of the Holocaust is seen as a kind of unwarranted intellectual arrogance, then the truly arrogant and the truly fanatical need not fear moral censure no matter what evil they choose to inflict on us all." This is pretty elementary stuff, but one welcomes the testimony of Haugaard and Simon and hopes their testimony will prompt other academics to reconsider their back-to-basics-phobia.

■ James Kelley, a writer in Washington, D.C., doesn't believe in God, the resurrection, miracles, or any of it. He is neither a Christian nor a theist, but he is a very happy Episcopalian, a member of St. Mark's on Capitol Hill where he has taught Sunday School and served on the vestry. He took a poll of parishioners and discovered there are many more like him. According to this news story, "The least satisfied members were the few who hold any traditional Christian beliefs. It is the orthodox who are the heretics. Kelley said he hopes that they choose to stay, but he will understand if they choose to leave." He is pro-choice all the way. Regular readers will recognize Neuhaus' Law at work: Where orthodoxy is optional, it will sooner or later be proscribed.

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■ Back in the second century, Marcion decided that the bloody-minded Yhwh of the Old Testament could in no way be the God whom Jesus taught us to address as Father. Ever since, with drearily familiar variations, others have been declaring the same "discovery." Most recently Professor Regina Schwartz of Northwestern University, whose *The Curse of Cain: The Violent Legacy of Monotheism* has been receiving considerable attention (see review by James Alison, page 48 in this issue). Unlike Marcion and other discoverers, however, Ms. Schwartz doesn't claim that her interpretation is made imperative by the text. It is simply her preferred reading of the text. Christopher Shea, writing in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, catches the postmodernist twist. "Any one story line can be read in contradictory ways. In the final pages of her book, she invites her readers to write their own variants of the Bible, with new creation stories, new exoduses. She has crossed the line, she says, 'from truth and reason to truths and pluralism.' For mainstream Bible scholars, that line may be a battle line. There may not be much room for compromise, after all, between the poststructuralists, with their infinite readings, and those who find in the Old Testament one Truth and one sacred deity. No more room, in fact, than there was for peace between the Israelites and the Canaanites. The continuing fight between the postmodernists and the believers in Truth may turn out, after all, to be academe's version of the curse of Cain." The violent legacy, one might say, of the abandonment of truth and reason.

■ "Truth in advertising" is the phrase that comes to mind. Crossroad publishers has brought out *The von Balthasar Reader*, edited by Medard Kehl, S.J. and Werner Löser, S.J., and translated by Robert J. Daly, S.J. and Fred Lawrence. It's a thick paperback of 437 pages and costs $24.95. There is the problem that it carries two copyrights, 1997 and 1982, but a Balthasar scholar of our acquaintance points out that it is entirely a reprint of the 1982 edition. Then there is the problem that eight sections in the original reader are omitted because, it says here, they will soon be translated into English in another volume. In fact, translations—and much more able translations—of almost everything in this book are now available elsewhere. Crossroad's reader helps one understand why, toward the end of his life, Balthasar transferred to Ignatius Press all rights to English translations of his work.

■ Their liberal allies tell the folks at the American Anti-Slavery Group (AASG) that they'll lose their credibility if they accept the support of people such as Pat Robertson, William Bennett, and Gary Bauer. Charles Jacobs, research director of AASG, has given that some thought but he notes that the establishment black leadership here—e.g., Jesse Jackson and the Congressional Black Caucus—doesn't seem very interested in black slavery in Africa. All the human rights groups agree that chattel slavery is thriving in places such as Sudan and Mauritania. Writing in the *Boston Globe*, Jacobs reports that Jesse Jackson says he doesn't want to get involved because it sounds "anti-Arab" (AASG has three Muslims on its board). Some such as Minister Farrakhan have strong political and, perhaps, financial ties to the African slavers, while former U.S. Representative Myrvin Dymally gets $120,000 per year as a lobbyist for Mauritania. Pat Robertson, on the other hand, shows scenes of slave trading in Sudan on the *700 Club* and calls upon viewers to battle "for our Christian brethren in bondage." But friends say AASG will lose credibility with liberals if it gets mixed up with the religious right. Credibility with friends like that is not much of a loss, so AASG has decided to take its support where it can get it. Slavery, writes Jacobs, "is not a question of right or left, just right or wrong."

■ What is the conflict over women's ordination really about? Well, obviously it's about women's ordination, but it's also about much more than that, according to an article by Mark Chaves in the University of Chicago's *Journal of Religion*. "The Symbolic Significance of Women's Ordination" contends that the conflict is over how churches want to situate themselves in relation to what might be called the modernity project. "Part of the 1970s conflict within the Episcopal Church, for example, was about whether or not this denomination would draw its organizational models from Rome and the sacramental environment or from the American liberal environment," Chaves writes. In ordaining women, Episcopalians were, consciously or not, shifting from one ecclesiastical environment to another, "a shift with nontrivial ecumenical consequences." After the Civil War, Chaves says, "gender equality became one part of a broader liberal agenda associated with 'progressive human society,' with 'human improvement,' and with 'modern tendencies.'" In fact, since the Reformation, what is called "cultural Protestantism" has had a deep proprietorial interest in the general culture, and in presenting itself as attuned to the modernity project. "From this perspective," writes Chaves, "a denomination's formal policy about the status of women is less an indicator of women's literal status within the denomination and more a ritual enactment of its position vis-à-vis the liberal and modern agenda of institutionalizing gender equality." The conflict over women's ordination, then, is about many things. In terms of the sociology of religion, it is chiefly about how groups evaluate the currently dominant liberal interpretation of social progress.

■ We have to turn down most requests to make

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announcements in this space, but Father Edwin Okon of St. Joseph's Church in Nigeria writes such an affecting letter about the parish's need for Catholic books and devotional literature that it is hard to resist. You may send such matter to him at P.O. Box 529, UYO, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, West Africa.

■ "Here I am, Bill Bright, a very sinful, depraved person. Christ comes to live within me, he died on the cross for my sins—past, present, and future. I'm promised that if I walk in the light, the blood of Jesus cleanses me from all sin. Not to live in the joy of the resurrection is to dishonor our Lord, because he gave us the power. It is like pushing your car around instead of driving it." Bill Bright is a piece of work. He's a big, ebullient man, seventy-seven years old and looks less than sixty. Back in the 1950s, Bright, a Presbyterian by confession, founded Campus Crusade for Christ, which now has a staff of more than fourteen thousand all over the world, and a budget of nearly $300 million. I recently met him for the first time at a theological conversation under the auspices of our "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" (ECT) initiative. He has been a strong supporter of ECT from the start and, like some other evangelical leaders, has taken flak for allegedly "selling out the Reformation" to popery. He has no interest other than reaching everyone in the world with "the simple Gospel of Jesus Christ." Campus Crusade's film, *Jesus*, which is remarkably well done, has reportedly been seen by almost two billion people to date. Bright's hope, and the hope of other evangelicals backing ECT, is that in the next century their endeavor to evangelize the world will be done with, not against, the Catholic Church. Campus Crusade has been much criticized over the years, especially by liberal Protestant and Catholic campus ministers, for being "simplistic" in its presentation of the Gospel. "True," says J. I. Packer, perhaps the most widely respected of evangelical theologians and a major participant in ECT. "But that is the penalty for being a broadscale entrepreneur. The Model T couldn't satisfy tastes for sports cars and Cadillacs." Many Christians are put off by the entrepreneurial style of such as Bill Bright, and I think I can understand that. The fullness of the Christian tradition—its intellectual and sacramental life, together with diverse ways of discipleship—cannot be reduced to "four spiritual laws" that lead to "accepting Jesus as my Savior and Lord." But accepting Jesus is a good place to begin, and there is little doubt that, through the work of Campus Crusade, hundreds of thousands have made that beginning. Those who criticize the methods of Bright and Campus Crusade would do better to emulate their zeal in sharing the good news of salvation. As for Bill Bright, I have no doubt that his life has been taken captive to the Gospel, and am grateful to know him as a brother in Christ. (For an informative profile of Bill and his wife Vonette, and of Campus Crusade, see the cover story in the July 14, 1997 issue of *Christianity Today*.)

■ "In sum, these textbooks are a national embarrassment." Another one? The statement is from *Closed Hearts, Closed Minds: The Textbook Story of Marriage*, a valuable new study done by Norval Glenn of the University of Texas for the Institute for American Values. Glenn and colleagues studied twenty textbooks widely used in college courses on marriage and family. If students believe what they are apparently being taught, the more sensible will steer clear of this archaic and oppressive institution called marriage. As for family, children receive short shrift in these textbooks, and one might conclude that, if one wants children, it makes more sense to have them without the encumbrances of marriage and family commitment. In sum, the textbook story of marriage is largely in the service of finishing off an institution already badly battered by knowledge-class elites and popular hedonism. For more information on the study, write Institute for American Values, 1841 Broadway, Suite 211, New York, New York 10023.

■ Pundits have had good fun with the proposal to rescind a federal mandate that all new toilets not exceed 1.6 gallons and let states set toilet standards. If it passes, the proposal would violate equality in flushing, says *Newsweek*'s Eleanor Clift. "I don't think the people of one state should be allowed to flush three times at whim while the people of California have to conserve water." It's heartening to see someone stand up for principle.

■ When one considers the best of what has been thought and said over the centuries, even the most erudite among us must at times feel like an illiterate. So each summer on vacation in the Ottawa Valley I take with me some classic tomes that I have never read seriously, or never read at all. This summer included St. Augustine's commentaries on the Psalms. For those familiar with contemporary biblical scholarship, St. Augustine is a wild and often exhilarating ride. His confident assumption that the entire Old Testament, and the Psalms in particular, are of a piece with God's saving purposes in Christ and the Church, combined with his imaginative flights based on a flawed Latin text that is in turn based on the Greek of the Septuagint, is light years removed from modern historical-critical efforts to determine the original meaning behind the texts. The contemporary alternative is perfectly represented by the remarks of Archbishop Rembert Weakland of Milwaukee in the discussion of a new lectionary at a meeting of the bishops conference. Weakland is, of course, a bully supporter of inclusive language and, along with a minority of other bishops, derisively dismissive of what in the

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jargon is called the "moderately horizontal inclusive language" of the proposed lectionary. Wherever possible, they believe, he/him/his must be replaced by their/you/anyone/everyone. The insistence is that the English of today—meaning what some hope will be the English of tomorrow—is without generic masculine pronouns. But at the bishops meeting Weakland wanted also to make a theological point. "We have never really gotten an analysis of what texts are Christological," he complained. "There is a creeping Christologicism going on among us." It is an observation worth a moment's thought. Psalm 1, for instance, says, "Blessed is the man. . ." Presumably Weakland wants biblical scholars to give us an analysis that will determine whether the original author(s) of the text intended by "the man" to refer to Jesus the Christ. Obviously, there is no conceivable way in which scholars could make such a determination. What Weakland calls "creeping Christologicism" is what Augustine and the tradition of Christian orthodoxy meant by saying that the Psalms are "the prayer book of the Church." If the Psalms are not—in various voices and tones—singing the Gospel of salvation proclaimed by the Church, they are, for Christians, no more than religious poetry of mixed literary merit and chiefly antiquarian interest. Subsequent scholarship has given us a better text than Augustine had, but he understood better than many of our contemporaries *why and how Christians pray the Psalms.* Nonetheless—although not in the way he apparently thinks—Archbishop Weakland is right: Beyond culture wars and gender politics, the debate over the text of the lectionary does engage very big theological questions.

■ What is commonly called the vocation crisis in the Catholic priesthood and religious orders may be something else, according to Archbishop Elden Curtiss of Omaha. He thinks the "crisis" is largely "artificial and contrived." He writes: "It seems to me that the vocation 'crisis' is precipitated and continued by people who want to change the Church's agenda, by people who do not support orthodox candidates loyal to the magisterial teaching of the Pope and bishops, and by people who actually discourage viable candidates from seeking priesthood and vowed religious life as the Church defines the ministries. I am personally aware of certain vocation directors, vocation teams, and evaluation boards who turn away candidates who do not support the possibility of ordaining women or who *defend* the Church's teaching about artificial birth control, or who exhibit a strong piety toward certain devotions, such as the Rosary. When there is a determined effort to discourage orthodox candidates from priesthood and religious life, then the vocation shortage which results is caused not by a lack of vocations but by deliberate attitudes and policies that deter certain viable candidates. And the same people who precipitate a decline in vocations by their negative actions call for the ordination of married men and women to replace the vocations they have discouraged. They have a death wish for ordained priesthood and vowed religious life as the Church defines them. They undermine the vocation ministry they are supposed to champion." In fact, after the precipitous declines of the seventies and eighties, priestly vocations are now edging upwards, and in some dioceses are flourishing. The line on the left is that these new seminarians and priests are "rigid" and "authoritarian," and that may be true in some cases. But rigidity is often subject to an ideological definition that would exclude from the priesthood a young John O'Connor or Francis George, not to mention Karol Wojtyla. The problem as described by Archbishop Curtiss would seem to deserve careful examination by the bishops, individually and collectively. Who is being encouraged and who discouraged? How do vocation directors understand their own vocation? And who is evaluating the evaluation boards?

■ If Charles, heir to the British throne, remarries, it would "create a crisis for the church," says Dr. George Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury. Well maybe, writes John Gummer in the *Spectator,* but it is a crisis very different from the one that Dr. Carey has in mind. It is not likely a crisis over the church's teaching about divorce and remarriage. After all, says Gummer, "the undeniable reason for the existence of the Church of England was to facilitate Henry's marriages and to legitimize his daughter Elizabeth." True, by the nineteenth century the C of E had retrieved a more orthodox teaching about marriage, and there really was a crisis in 1936 over Edward VIII's marrying a divorced woman. But that was a long time ago. Today bishops, deans, and innumerable priests are divorced and remarried, Gummer notes. "What sort of crisis is it when the C of E is endangered because a divorced layman marries a divorcee, but not when a bishop marries a divorcee? It can't be a theological crisis. . . . The issue is therefore entirely secular. What the Archbishop is asserting is that the Church of England sees the role of the heir to the throne as more significant in setting standards than that of a bishop. This may be a perfectly accurate contemporary observation, but it can hardly stand up theologically. . . . In fact, Dr. Carey is returning the Church of England to its roots. It is a Church which is about kings rather than bishops. In the sixteenth century, it was thought good for the state if the king could have his divorce and remarry. In the late twentieth century, the Church of England's view is that it would be better for the state if the future king did not remarry." The difference is that in the sixteenth century the Church *in* England really mattered. "The Archbishop's crisis is therefore a crisis about the very nature of the Church of

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England. What is the basis of its claim to teach on matters of faith and morals? A church which allowed Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell to decide its doctrines and direct its polity can hardly claim to be in a position to recall a prince to his duty." Whatever Charles does, Mr. Gummer thinks the monarchy will survive. He is not at all sure about the C of E.

■ Dear old Anthony Lewis, like the Energizer bunny, keeps going and going. Although I confess that I haven't read his columns for some time, even though they come free with the paper that, for some inexplicable reason of sentimental attachment, still accompanies my breakfast. But a reader kindly sends a column memorializing the late Justice William J. Brennan. Along the way in the column, Lewis notes that "the Supreme Court has the last word in our system" and quotes, approvingly, the statement of Justice Robert H. Jackson, "We are not final because we are infallible, but we are infallible only because we are final." Compare Vatican Council I and its excruciatingly modest definition of infallibility. On his main subject Lewis writes, "Justice Brennan spoke to our better angels. Sometimes the country was out of tune, and he failed." No, no, Tony, we failed him! Which, of course, is what Mr. Lewis means. Once it was that the government was accountable to the people; now the people are accountable to the government. As in the 1992 *Casey* decision where the Court announced that the nation was being "tested" by whether or not it agrees with the Court that the killing of unborn children is a constitutional right. One Supreme Court Justice, who is of a very different philosophy, told me that he doesn't read the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, or like publications. "Once you know that a clock is telling the wrong time, you don't keep looking at it," he said. I thank the reader for sending the column. Anthony Lewis lives.

■ Michael Kelly, former editor of *The New Republic*, has an appropriately strong piece excoriating the *New York Times* for continuing to portray the thugs and murderers of the Black Panthers as freedom fighters who were no more than, as it used to be said, liberals in a hurry. The *Times*' treatment of the Panthers is of a piece with a larger cultural phenomenon, Kelly writes. "As the aging sandalistas have accrued power and raised children, their values have become the values of the age. The result is a corollary to Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan's theory of defining deviancy down. Call it defining radicalism in. What was once radical is now normal. What was once left is now establishmentarian center." While the *Times*' ignoring of the lethal crimes of the Panthers is indeed to be criticized, Kelly's piece would have been further strengthened by a mention of the most searing indictment of the Panthers, David Horowitz's autobiography, *Radical Son*. Nonetheless, Kelly's contribution is most welcome. He concludes, "Nearly three decades later, the myth of the Panthers has not been exposed by the *Times*. It has been institutionalized. Pass the Cherry Garcia."

■ Here's a big story in the *Times* by Steven A. Holmes, "G.O.P. Leaders Back Bill on Religious Persecution." The gist of the story is that those awful evangelicals of "the religious right" are now flexing their muscles also in foreign policy. Presumably Jews, Catholics, and good liberals are in a heightened tizzy. The story is accompanied by a big picture of Speaker Newt Gingrich, Senator Trent Lott, and myself, with Lott shaking hands with Cheryl Halpern of the National Jewish Coalition. The other identifiable participant in the background is Bill Bennett. So that's two Catholics and one Jew. Apparently the picture editor didn't check with Mr. Holmes on his story line that religious persecution pits evangelical Protestants against everyone else. Or maybe those evangelicals have become so sneaky—dare we say Jesuitical?—that they are coopting Catholics and Jews to front for them. (A word to younger readers: "Jesuitical" refers to a religious order once suspected of excessive craftiness in its loyal service to the pope.)

■ More on *Newsweek*'s scare about the Pope possibly defining a new dogma that declares Mary Co-Redemptrix, etc. The very conservative *catholic eye* says *Newsweek*'s Ken Woodward has done some good things in the past: "But that hardly absolves him for writing the bogus 'new Marian dogma' pope-opera: Surely Woodward knows that this Pope has paid public homage to the great Cardinal John Henry Newman, which he'd *not* do if he thought Newman's famous 'rules' for the development of doctrine were wrong? As any 'Catholic intellectual' *ought* to know, Newman thought that a 'new' dogma must in effect be what the Church had always believed—it must reflect the *sensus fidelium*, as was true of the Immaculate Conception—and that the Faithful 'ought to be consulted' *especially* [he wrote] 'in the case of doctrines which bear directly upon devotional sentiments' which is precisely the point *re* Marian doctrines. Political-style petitions from a fraction of the now-*billion* Faithful is hardly 'consultation'? Call it 'Paparazzi Journalism' and trust a great Pope to consult Newman, not *Newsweek*!"

■ Please see the box on page 60 about putting First Things in your will. Please think about it.

■ This from the *Times*' report of the annual conference of the Christian Coalition: "Barry W. Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, a group that attacks the Christian Coalition, said that despite the ruminations over the leadership shift, Mr.

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Robertson was still clearly in command. 'I think you could literally appoint to the Christian Coalition's board of directors Jesus, Moses, and Muhammad,' he said, 'and Pat Robertson would still call the shots.'" Those literalists, they're always going over the top. The mission statement of Americans United for Separation of Church and State is marvelously succinct, however—"a group that attacks the Christian Coalition."

■ As all the interested world has good reason to believe, Martin Peretz, owner of *The New Republic*, fired Michael Kelly as editor because he thought Kelly was being too hard on the Clinton Administration and, more particularly, too hard on Mr. Peretz's close friend, Al Gore. Kelly was editor less than a year, having taken over from Andrew Sullivan. Kelly, in turn, has been replaced by Charles Lane, who came up from within the magazine's ranks and is apparently less likely to rankle Mr. Peretz's partisan proclivities. In the issue after Kelly's firing, Mr. Peretz has this to say: "So Lane represents continuity with the deepest traditions of this journal: political independence, intellectual seriousness, good writing, and decency toward those with whom one disagrees." Political independence? What cheek. What gall. What nerve. What brass. I believe there is also a Yiddish word for it that escapes me at the moment.

■ The usually astute and frequently courageous Maureen Dowd of the *Times*—the newly painted paper formerly known as the Gray Lady—couldn't quite bring herself to go against the tide in commenting on ABC's *Nothing Sacred*. She sympathetically notes her mother's displeasure with the unimaginative sendup of things Catholic, and she cites Alan Keyes' observation that the program is "propaganda dressed up as entertainment," but she finally says the series "stands out as intelligent television, especially in the mush pit of ABC's fall schedule." Perhaps so, given that huge qualifier. But what really seems to impress her is that the program's cocreator is "Paul Leland," a pseudonym for a Jesuit priest, and that Michael Breault, a Jesuit brother, is a consultant. She writes, "Jesuits are the flyboys of the Church, the teaching intelligentsia most likely to be found drinking pricey wine and traveling abroad and devising interpretations of Church dogma." Devising interpretations—that rings true, although she apparently means it as a compliment. In the series, "Father Ray" tells a woman in the confessional who says she is going to have an abortion, "You're an adult with your own conscience. I can't tell you what to do. I can only tell you what the Church teaches." Which, of course, he proceeds not to do. The bifurcation between what he thinks and what the Church teaches raises the question of by whose authority he is hearing confessions, and is of a piece with the cocreating Jesuit priest who is afraid or ashamed to work under his own name. Given the apparently unlimited tolerance of hijinks by Jesuit "flyboys," it cannot be fear, at least not fear of his Jesuit superiors (who, it is reasonable to assume, approve of his involvement with "intelligent television"). Where there is shame there is hope. Ms. Dowd, too, one would like to think, may have second thoughts about her fashionably insouciant response to pseudonymous priests creating pseudo-priests who mouth the weary clichés of yesteryear's progressivisms. Unlike "Paul Leland," she does have a reputation to maintain.

■ The McCain-Feingold bill was but an instance of perennial agitation for "campaign finance reform." One thing wrong with such agitation is that it plays into the everybody-does-it line that obscures, and is intended to obscure, the fact that not everybody does the sleazy and sometimes criminal things that some people do to raise political money. Moreover, such "reforms" greatly strengthen government's regulatory control over political speech. Columnist George Will calls this a "regime level" question, and he's right, meaning that it drives to the heart of this constitutional republic. Campaign finance reform sounds like a motherhood issue, and it is no surprise that groups sign on to it without much thought. The September meeting of the Administrative Committee of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) had before it a staff-drafted statement that claimed to be nonpartisan but would surely have been exploited as an endorsement of McCain-Feingold. The National Right to Life Committee, among others, strongly protested the statement, a number of bishops effectively challenged its adoption, and the statement was withdrawn. A good piece of work, or at least a bad piece of work avoided.

■ Another item for the Oops Department: We ran a rave review of the new edition of *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* and had some fine things to say about editor E. A. Livingstone and "his" colleagues. Elizabeth Livingstone is most decidedly a woman. In Oxford she is to be seen most mornings pedaling her bicycle to morning prayer and Mass at Christ Church Cathedral. She has devoted most of her life to the dictionary and the quadrennial international patristics conference in Oxford. We are told that she does not suffer fools at all and, if we know what is good for us, we will apologize profusely, which we hereby do. The editor responsible has been sternly rebuked. It doesn't matter that the English have this annoying thing about not using their proper names. You're supposed to *know*.

■ Hard-core fans of Peter Berger—of whom there are, with great justice, many—will welcome his new

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book, *Redeeming Laughter: The Comic Dimension of Human Experience* (Walter de Gruyter, 215 pp., $23.95). Asked to name their favorite Berger, his readers are hard pressed, but I expect that *A Rumor of Angels* might take first place. The new work is in many ways an extended development of that earlier book's contention that the comic is a "signal of transcendence" that suggests (but hardly "proves") that behind the apparent absurdity of what we call reality is an ultimate order grounded in the transcendent reality that is God. Berger is keenly aware that writing about humor can be, and usually is, a humorless undertaking, so he tries to keep the tone light and laces the text with marvelous comic stories, a.k.a. jokes (almost all of which I remember our telling one another). There are short chapters on Jewish humor and why it is so notable, on "the comic as diversion," "the comic as consolation," "the comic as game of intellect," and "the comic as weapon." The more explicitly religious and theological sections toward the end are prefaced by Berger's eccentric (read that as a compliment) interpretation of Tertullian's *Credo quia absurdum*. "It is not so much that one should believe because something is absurd, but rather that one is led toward faith by the perception of absurdity. Needless to say, there is nothing inevitable about this progression. . . . In other words (and never mind what Tertullian actually meant): it is not the object of faith that is absurd. The world is absurd. And, therefore, faith is possible." This theme of debunking what is taken for reality has, albeit in quite different ways, run through Berger's writing for four decades. It appears in his very early and immensely popular *Invitation to Sociology*, in his skeptical treatment of religious pretensions in *The Noise of Solemn Assemblies*, and in more academic works such as *The Social Construction of Reality*. The superficial critic might conclude that Berger was from the beginning what today is called a postmodernist. Quite the opposite is the case. Truth, for Berger, is never in quotation marks. While he lustily deflates the claims of sundry rationalisms, he does so with great respect for reason. In sum, for Berger, debunking is in the service of clearing away the brush of what is taken for reality in order to disclose the tremendous mystery (Rudolf Otto) that is, however elusive, the truth about everything. He and I have had many friendly arguments about the theological implications of that disclosure. He makes rather a point of being less than an entirely orthodox Christian. But I am among the many who are in his debt for delineating the ways in which the world examined seriously—which is to say also comically—is opened to the worlds of which it is part.

■ The French have not stopped talking about the Pope's visit in August for the World Youth Day (which is actually six days). When more than a million people, mainly young people, turned out for the final Mass, the suspicion took root that something very strange was happening. Writing in the *International Herald Tribune*, columnist William Pfaff says it was "a cry for faith, rather than of faith." "What was clearly demonstrated was that just as the generation shaped by the 1960s rejected the certainties of those who were formed by the Great Depression, the Second World War, and the early Cold War, a new generation now has arrived to demand an account from its own parents. This new generation is saying: You failed to transmit to us positive values in which you believed. We now must look for them elsewhere. A striking and even mysterious sign held up in the crowd on Sunday said to the Pope: 'You are our youth.'"

■ The government parks people have gotten out of the head-counting business, and "Coach" Bill McCartney has said they're not going to issue any figures, but nobody challenges the claim that the Promise Keepers in Washington was not just big but the biggest Washington gathering in American history. Yet it received comparatively little attention in the media, especially as compared with much, much smaller pro-abortion and gay marches of recent years. Our parish paper, the *Times*, had several long and reasonably fair stories, but nothing like the pages and pages of tie-in stories devoted to those other events. On network television, Promise Keepers hardly happened. Walter Goodman, the *Times* media critic, says it was because the sight of hundreds of thousands of men praying and praising Jesus would put viewers to sleep, which is another way of saying that Walter Goodman isn't interested in that sort of thing. The subject of liberal media bias does put a lot of readers to sleep, so I won't dwell on it, but simply note that there is no plausible explanation of the cold shoulder given Promise Keepers other than that it had two strikes against it: It was perceived as religious and as conservative. (They're against abortion, aren't they?) Either one is, of course, tantamount to three strikes. With both, you're out of the media game (except for commentaries on the sinister religion-conservative connection that got you thrown out).

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■ The Word became flesh and nothing can ever be the same again. May the coming holy days be filled with grace and glory for you and yours.

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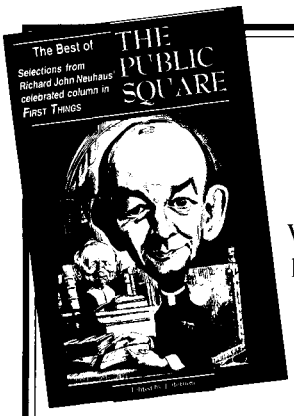

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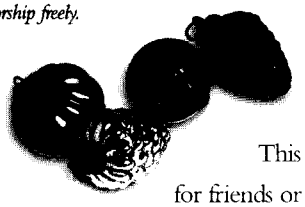

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